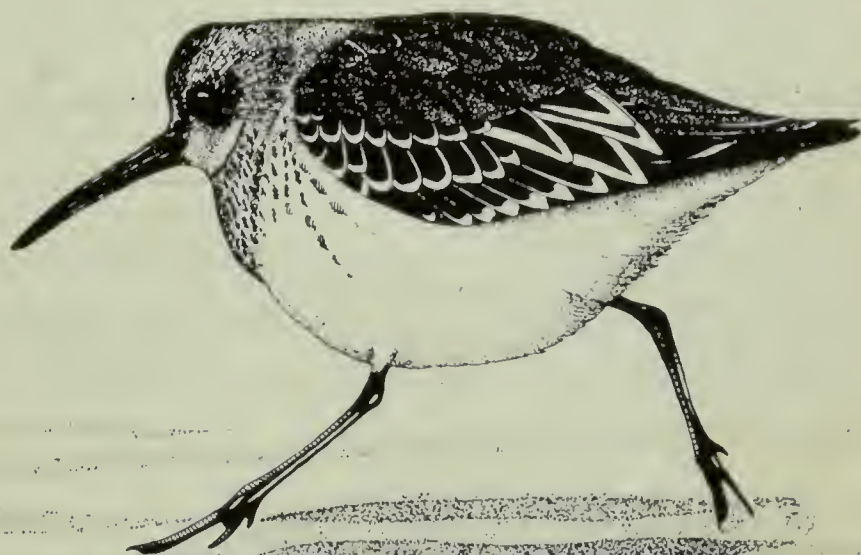


British Birds

Volume 76 Number 1 January 1983



Rare breeding birds in the UK in 1981
Identification pitfalls: Cory's Shearwater
Mystery photographs
Notes
News and comment · Recent reports
Reviews

British Birds

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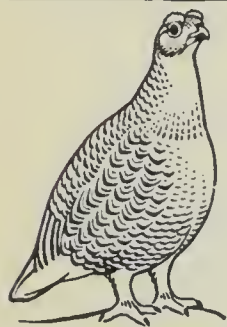
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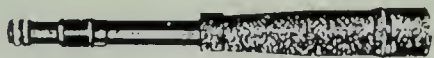
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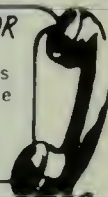
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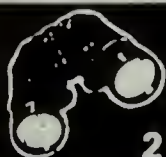
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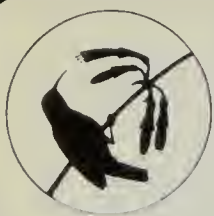
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British Birds

VOLUME 76 NUMBER 1 JANUARY 1983



Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 1981

J. T. R. Sharrock and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel

The functions of the Panel and our methods of working are now well known and accepted by the network of county and regional recorders and are familiar to regular readers of our annual report. Although last year's achievement of including records from every area of the United Kingdom was not matched this time, we have every hope that reports from the four outstanding areas will be forthcoming in due course. Completeness is essential for full use to be made of the Panel's main functions: (1) to provide a safe, central archive repository for detailed information which might otherwise be lost to posterity; and (2) to provide a general summary for each species so that scientific studies can be made of current trends which, in turn, will enable appropriate strategies for the benefit of each species to be adopted by the nature conservation bodies.

The Panel is supported, both morally and financially, by *British Birds*, the BTO, the RSPB and the NCC. As in 1980, the Panel's members during 1981 were Dr L. A. Batten, R. H. Dennis, Ian Prestt, Dr J. T. R. Sharrock (secretary) and Robert Spencer.

Most records reach the Panel from the county and regional recorders. Individual observers are strongly encouraged to submit their data via the relevant county recorder, although it is recognised that there may very occasionally be exceptional reasons for sending a report

directly to the Panel's secretary. The special forms for submitting records are available free from the address at the end of this report.

The policy in our published reports is to include information only when safe to do so, and provided that we have received permission; we publish basic details, sufficient for the purposes of most researchers and enough to give birdwatchers a balanced annual summary of the events concerning the United Kingdom's rarest breeding birds.

In this report, counties are named only when permission has been given. In other cases, code letters are used: these are the same as in previous reports, so that histories of decline or colonisation can be followed, even though the locations must remain confidential to ensure freedom from disturbance. This report contains a mixture of old and new county names: we have used those supplied by the recorders.

For most species, we have given a range of figures for 'pairs breeding', the lower representing the number confirmed breeding and the upper (those 'possibly breeding') the maximum if, for instance, every singing male or single sighting represented a nesting pair. Although these ranges are often very wide, they can be calculated consistently each year and are, we believe, valuable for comparisons. As well as being updated, the figures in several tables have been revised. Readers should note that some records of apparent migrants and of definitely non-breeding summering flocks or individuals have been intentionally omitted.

Summary of the year

There was no single spectacular event to make the 1981 breeding season memorable, but it was, on the whole, a satisfactory year. Goldeneyes *Bucephala clangula* showed a further increase and a record number of ducklings was seen. Marsh Harriers *Circus aeruginosus* and Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus* both achieved 20th-century peak numbers of successful nesting pairs and record numbers of young reared. Hobbies *Falco subbuteo* also had a good season, with a high level of breeding success, as measured by number



Fig. 1. Areas covered by this report. Records (or negative returns) were supplied for the 81 area shown black. Some individual observers supplied data for the counties left white, but records were not received from the local recorders, and so the picture may be very incomplete for these four areas. The Panel does not collect records from the Republic of Ireland

of young reared per brood. Avocets *Recurvirostra avosetta*, which owe their thriving position largely to the RSPB, had their best season for at least 150 years, with high numbers of breeding pairs and record numbers of young reared. Cetti's Warblers *Cettia cetti* continued to spread to new sites and new counties, consolidating their already firm position. Firecrests *Regulus ignicapillus* showed a resurgence, with the 1981 population the best since the record numbers of 1975. Serins *Serinus serinus* at last managed more than a lone pair in a year, and two pairs notched up the fourth and fifth British breeding records, rearing a total of nine young, and a third pair may have attempted to breed. Another would-be colonist, the Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*, nested for the third year running, but the three pairs in 1981 managed to rear only one young. One new species appears in our report: an Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina* which sang for over three weeks in Huntingdonshire.

The news was, however, not all good. Black-necked Grebes *Podiceps nigricollis* were in very low numbers (but Slavonian Grebes *P. auritus* had an average season). Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa* not only had a disastrous season on the Ouse Washes, due to spring flooding, but were also present at fewer sites than in any summer for over 20 years. The number of Redwings *Turdus iliacus* was the lowest for more than a decade. In contrast to the Cetti's Warblers' success story, Savi's Warblers *Locustella luscinioides* were at their lowest level for five years and Marsh Warblers *Acrocephalus palustris* were scarcer, at least outside their main stronghold, than for at least eight years. Finally, after four years of annual breeding, there was only one report of a single Lapland Bunting *Calcarius lapponicus*.

Systematic list

We have received no relevant 1980 records of the following species:

Great Northern Diver <i>Gavia immer</i>	Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i>
Purple Heron <i>Ardea purpurea</i>	Little Gull <i>Larus minutus</i>
King Eider <i>Somateria spectabilis</i>	Glaucous Gull <i>L. hyperboreus</i>
Rough-legged Buzzard <i>Buteo lagopus</i>	Black Tern <i>Chlidonias niger</i>
Kentish Plover <i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	Shore Lark <i>Eremophila alpestris</i>
Sanderling <i>Calidris alba</i>	Citrine Wagtail <i>Motacilla citreola</i>
Pectoral Sandpiper <i>Calidris melanotos</i>	Great Grey Shrike <i>Lanius excubitor</i>
Jack Snipe <i>Lymnocyptes minimus</i>	Woodchat Shrike <i>L. senator</i>
Spotted Sandpiper <i>Actitis macularia</i>	

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*

Two sites, but probably only one individual summering.
County B Two sites, but probably one bird: (1) single adult on 17th April and 9th-11th May; (2) single from 20th May to at least 10th June.
1977 Perthshire ADDITIONAL DATE: adult seen on 17th June as well as 11th April and 14th August (*Brit. Birds* 73: 9).

A disappointing reverse from the events of 1974-80, which seemed to be heralding colonisation, with a pair nest-building and copulating in 1980:

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Sites	0	1	2	5	2	0	1	3	2
Pairs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Individuals in summer	0	1	2	5	2	0	1	4	1

Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*

35 sites: 52-71 pairs breeding.

Argyll One site: juvenile on 7th August.

Inverness-shire 32 sites: (1)-(32) total of 61-64 pairs of which 50-54 pairs bred, 33-40 young seen.

Morayshire One site: five pairs, five young on 26th July.

Perthshire One site: pair on 27th July, feeding one young in August.

1977 Perthshire CORRECTION: site (3), 19th April, not 9th April.

Numbers in 1981 were about normal, for, excluding 1975, when there was only incomplete coverage of Inverness-shire, the 1973-80 average was 53-65 pairs:

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Sites	22	25	12	23	15	18	27	36	35
Pairs proved breeding	52	58	39	70	42	37	58	53	52
Pairs possibly breeding	53	63	43	75	51	55	77	80	71

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

Three sites: 3-9 pairs breeding.

Gwynedd One site: adult 29th April to 17th June.

County B One site: three pairs in April, single individual on 12th June.

County D One site: four or five pairs in May, three pairs in June, total of five young (broods of one, one and three) seen between mid July and early August.

1977 County B CORRECTION AND ADDITION: Two sites: (1) adult on 19th (not 9th) April; (2) pair on 26th March.

1978 County B One site: single in full breeding plumage.

The 1981 position was very discouraging, after four good years:

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Sites	4	2	4	2	7	6	6	9	3
Pairs proved breeding	18	15	2	10	11	13	12	11	3
Pairs possibly breeding	19	18	11	11	16	15	14	21	9

Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophris*

One site: single again summered with Gannets *Sula bassana*.

Shetland One site: adult from 21st February to mid August.

The February arrival was the earliest recorded for this individual, which has frequented the Hermaness gannetry annually since 1974.

Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

16 sites: 1-47 pairs breeding.

Glamorgan, West One site: single on 22nd March and 4th April.

Gwynedd One site: male booming, also eight records of singles in breeding season.

Kent One site: male booming up to mid June, at least one adult thought to be feeding young on 7th July, but breeding not proved conclusively.

Lancashire Two sites: (1) 13 males booming; (2) male booming.

Lincolnshire/south Humberside One site: male booming on two dates in May.

Norfolk Seven sites: (1) two males booming, one brood reared; (2) two or three males booming; (3)(4) two males booming; (5)-(7) single males booming.

Suffolk Three sites: (1) eight males booming; (2) seven or eight males booming; (3) male booming.

1979 Glamorgan, West CORRECTION: Booming from 8th May to 9th June (not 'March to June' as stated, *Brit. Birds* 75: 157).

With 60% of the British population concentrated in just three sites, this

species remains in a very vulnerable position:

	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Sites	18	17	21	19	16
Pairs proved breeding	0	2	1	4	1
Pairs possibly breeding	43	47	51	48	47

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*

One site: single dead female with brood-patch.

Cambridgeshire One site: female with brood-patch dead on road beneath overhead wires near suitable breeding habitat on 8th June.

1979 Glamorgan, West One site: male on 25th May and 30th June, where singles also in June and August 1976 and September 1977.

1980 Glamorgan, West DELETION: records listed (*Brit. Birds* 75: 157) actually referred to 1979 (see above).

Breeding has still never been proved in Britain, although it probably took place in the 19th Century and in the 1940s and 1950s, and 'singing' males were heard in summer in 1970, 1979 and 1980, and, in the last two years, pairs were present.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Sites	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	1	1
Individuals in summer	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	2	1

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

None reported.

1973 Argyll One site: single agitated adult on 25th May, site checked again on 5th July, but none present.

1974 Argyll One site: pair on 20th July, no nest found.

After wild pairs breeding successfully in 1978 and 1979, it is disappointing to have none in 1980 or 1981; single pairs in 1979 and 1980 included female escape from nearby collection.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Sites	1	1	0	0	0	1	3	3	0
Pairs proved breeding	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	0
Pairs possibly breeding	1	1	0	0	0	1	4	3	0

Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*

One site: single individual.

County A One site: single on 7th July.

This site was close to that where a pair was showing territorial behaviour on 1st June 1980.

Black Duck *Anas rubripes*

Two sites: single male and single female, latter breeding with male Mallard *A. platyrhynchos*.

Gwynedd One site: male all year; three immature hybrids in autumn may have been 1980 offspring.

Scilly One site: female paired with male Mallard; three hybrid young seen from 8th June.

1979 Gwynedd One site: male from 11th February to 24th May, 19th and 22nd June and 4th November into 1980.

1980 Gwynedd One site: male present throughout year, consorted with female Mallard, three full-grown apparent hybrid young on 11th October.

Hybridisation with Mallards, as in Scilly (1977-81) and Gwynedd (1980), is also frequent in the species' main North American breeding range.

Pintail *Anas acuta*

15 sites: 8-30 pairs breeding.

Angus Two sites: (1) pair from 25th April to 30th May; (2) pair from 6th May.

Cambridgeshire Two sites: (1) six pairs, of which one proved breeding and five probably bred; (2) two May records: 'possibly failed due to flooding in spring'.

Cumbria One site: male on 7th May, 18th May and 3rd June, also two females on first date.

Lancashire Three sites: (1) two males on 13th May, then one on 16th May and 21st June; (2) male on 8th May; (3) male on 27th June.

Norfolk One site: pair in June.

Orkney Three sites: (1) five or six pairs bred; (2) pair, the female with six young on 24th May; (3) pair, the female with five juveniles on 2nd July.

Shetland Two sites: (1) three pairs present; (2) pair present.

Suffolk One site: two males and one female on 13th June.

1976 Perthshire One site: pair on 11th April.

This elegant species remains one of the rarest of British breeding ducks:

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Sites	3	7	11	10	15	10	19	15	15
Pairs proved breeding	3	10	12	6	10	7	10	9	8
Pairs possibly breeding	5	11	25	16	26	23	41	25	30

Garganey *Anas querquedula*

37 sites: 5-49 pairs breeding.

Avon One site: pair on 14th May, male from 8th June to 9th August, two females on 18th June, two from 12th August to 6th September.

Cambridgeshire Two sites: (1) four pairs, two with broods of eight and six young, other two strongly suspected of breeding; (2) five pairs probably bred.

Devon Three sites: (1) pair from 27th March to 17th April; (2) pair from 20th May to 7th June; (3) male on 4th May.

Dunbartonshire One site: male on 9th May.

Essex Two sites: (1) male on 31st May; (2) female on 25th June.

Kent Two sites: (1) two pairs summered: 'lowest total for at least 21 years and compares with peak of 23 pairs in 1962'; (2) two pairs perhaps bred.

Lancashire Two sites: (1) male overwintered from 1980, pair on 10th April, all three staying until 1st May, female on 12th July; (2) pair on 7th May, male on 12th June, pair on 19th June.

Lincolnshire/south Humberside Two sites: (1) pair reared four young; (2) pair during 8th-22nd May, female injury-feigning on 13th June.

Norfolk 15 sites: (1)-(15) one to three individuals at each, but no confirmed breeding.

Nottinghamshire One site: pair on 10th April and on 24th-25th May.

Outer Hebrides Three sites: (1) two males during 12th-14th May; (2) male on 1st June; (3) two males on 6th June.

Suffolk Two sites: (1) pair with eight small ducklings in mid May; (2) pair probably bred.

Warwickshire One site: pair, male displaying.

1980 Warwickshire One site: pair bred but failed, male from 22nd April, female from 13th May, egg partly eaten by predator in late May, female last seen 27th July.

This species was added to our list only last year, when the (revised) totals were 4-54 pairs at 34 sites.

Scaup *Aythya marila*

Two sites: 0-3 pairs breeding.

Outer Hebrides Two sites: (1) two females on 14th May, male on 10th June; (2) female during 17th-26th April, male until 10th May.

1973 Gwent One site: male from 20th May to 12th July.

1974 Argyll One site: pair on 15th July.

1976 Argyll One site: three males and two females from 30th April to 7th May.

A few sometimes stay in late spring or into summer, but breeding remains very rare. Apart from a probable hybrid female paired to a male Tufted Duck *A. fuligula* in North Yorkshire in 1978 and 1979 (not shown in the table), the only recent instances of breeding were in Perthshire in 1970 and in Orkney in 1973 and 1978:

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Sites	2	1	0	1	0	1	1	2	2
Pairs proved breeding	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Pairs possibly breeding	2	1	0	3	0	1	1	2	3

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

Six sites: 5-82 pairs breeding.

Caithness One site: six females. Very incomplete census.

Dunbartonshire/Stirlingshire One site: four pairs and one male on 26th May, six females but no young on 8th July.

Fermanagh One site: 63 pairs, up to 21 young (four broods) on 17th July.

Perthshire Three sites: (1) pair on 15th April, five pairs on 9th May, female with four young and additional female on 12th July; (2) male and female on 9th May; (3) male on 13th June.

1979 County A One site: up to three males and three females from 10th May to 24th July.

Unless successful (and broods are seen), breeding is difficult to prove, so that the maximum figure is perhaps the most valid for comparisons. On that basis, the last four years have seen a progressive decline:

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Sites	13	13	12	14	13	9	17	10	6
Pairs proved breeding	4	10	32	22	24	16	98	7	5
Pairs possibly breeding	133	142	159	159	156	141	128	113	82

Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

11 sites: 29-52 pairs breeding.

Argyll One site: two 'brownheads', probably juveniles, on 7th August.

Bedfordshire It should be placed on record that a small free-winged flock of deliberately released Goldeneyes now remains throughout the year on flooded gravel-pits along the River Ivel.

Cumbria Four sites: (1) female from 14th May to 29th June; (2) female on 24th June and during 16th-24th July; (3) female on 6th July; (4) female on 8th July. At fifth site, 23 on 9th July.



Dunbartonshire/Stirlingshire One site: male and two females on 1st August.

Lothian, West One site: male on 31st May, pair and immature male on 1st June, adult male and immature male on 12th June.

Perthshire Two sites: (1) two males and female on 14th June; (2) female on 25th May.

County B Two sites: (1)(2) eggs laid in 41 nests, all but one in nest-boxes, 29 successful broods hatched, 286 young, 97 juveniles in late July suggesting very good fledging success; population level and success best ever.

1974 Perthshire Three sites: (1) pair on 12th May; (2) female on 20th May, two males on 23rd July; (3) female on 10th May and 14th June.

1975 Perthshire One site: male until 25th June.

1976 Perthshire Two sites: (1) two pairs on 11th May; (2) male from 18th May to 4th June.

1977 Perthshire Two sites: (1) two males on 21st May; (2) two males and a female on 4th June.

1978 Perthshire Three sites: (1) adult male, two first-summer males and three females on 3rd May; (2) four on 7th May; (3) male on 28th May.

1979 Perthshire One site: female on 13th June.

The steady improvement in numbers continues, with the fourth successive good year: 1973 1974 1975 1976 1977 1978 1979 1980 1981

Sites	1	5	3	8	12	18	17	11	11
Pairs proved breeding	3	3	3	5	6	12	22	26	29
Pairs possibly breeding	3	7	6	12	14	27	43	37	52
Young hatched	22	19	10	46	11	40	110	165	286

Smew *Mergus albellus*

Two sites: two females and one male, but no evidence of breeding.

Renfrewshire One site: female from 11th July to 29th September.

Stirlingshire One site: female on 12th April, male during 1st-29th May.

1975 County A One site: female on 27th April and, presumed same, 11th May.

There has never been any suspicion of breeding, but this is the sort of build-up which could be a prelude to colonisation:

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Sites	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	2	2
Individuals in summer	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	2	3

Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

Eight sites: 2-9 pairs breeding.

Norfolk One site: at least one from 20th May to 9th August.

Nottinghamshire One site: two pairs, one rearing two young and the other one young.

Suffolk One site: single on 6th July.

County D One site: single displaying during breeding season.

County F One site: single on 1st June.

County G One site: single on 13th June.

County H Two sites: (1)(2) singles on 27th June and 19th July.

We have no information concerning the New Forest population, for which we hope in due course to receive data on nest-site habitats, breeding success, reasons for failures, and so on, as well as population trends.

Outside the New Forest, the position looks encouraging:

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Sites	1	3	2	7	8	8	3	3	8
Pairs proved breeding	0	1	0	0	2	1	1	2	2
Pairs possibly breeding	1	3	2	7	8	8	3	4	9

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

46 pairs: 21 young reared by 18 pairs.

Central Wales Total of 42 pairs known, of which 31 (probably 32) laid eggs, and a further six started to build nests. There were 28-30 other unmated individuals, so total Welsh population was about 120 in April: the highest this century. Two nests were robbed of eggs, and third may have been robbed; one of these pairs repeated and reared a chick. Total of 18 pairs nested successfully, rearing 21 young. 'Main cause of failure and brood reduction seems to have been the cool weather in May and June.'

The Kite Committee has revised the figures for 1976-80, with the inclusion of some late records. The minimum 1973-81 totals were as follows:

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Total pairs	26	32	32	36	34	39	42	42	46
Breeding pairs	26	27	28	29	28	32	30	29	32
Successful pairs	10	9	15	15	12	13	14	21	18
Young reared	14	12	24	18	17	22	18	27	21

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*

Reintroduced: no breeding yet.

Western Scotland Of 37 individuals released by spring 1981, 24-26 are known to have survived. Display and stick-carrying provided evidence of pair formation, but no breeding attempts known.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

22 sites: 49 young reared from 16 of 20 known nests.

Cambridgeshire Three sites: (1) pair reared three young, the first breeding in the county this century; (2) five individuals from April to June; (3) female summered, from 31st May to at least 26th August.

Essex Three sites: (1) pair all summer; (2) female on 10th June, female on 14th June; (3) single on 21st June.

Humberside One site: pair present from 28th May to early September, display and nest-building in early June, but no other evidence of breeding.

Lincolnshire/south Humberside Two sites: (1) pair on 23rd May, male in June and July, female in August, two juveniles in August and September; (2) female from June to August, male on 29th July.

Norfolk Eight sites: (1) male and two females reared three and two young; (2) three pairs, rearing four, three and no young; (3) two males and three females reared five and four young; (4) two males and three females reared three and no young (one nest robbed); (5) pair reared two young; (6) pair reared at least one young; (7) pair reared no young; (8) pair summered.

Suffolk Five sites: (1) two males and three females reared four, four and no young (one nest flooded); (2) three nests, three, two and one young reared; (3) pair reared four young; (4) pair on 3rd June; (5) pair on 12th June.

From the depressingly low level of the early 1970s, the Marsh Harrier has, with the aid of the conservation bodies, achieved the century's peak of successful nests and young reared in the early 1980s; prospects look rosy for expansion into new sites.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Total sites	4	4	8	11	14	12	19	32	22
Sites with successful nests	4	4	3	6	9	9	8	11	10
Breeding males	4	5	5	13	15	15	24	21	18
Breeding females	6	6	7	13	16	16	26	23	22
Nests	5	6	7	11	15	15	15	22	20
Successful nests	5	4	5	9	13	12	12	14	16
Young reared	16	10	18	25	44	34	39	40	49

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*

Eight sites: 2-9 pairs breeding, one pair reared four young.

Lincolnshire/south Humberside Three sites: (1) at least six individuals between 16th May and 15th August, including a first-summer male from 7th July to 15th August; (2) female during 10th-12th May; (3) first-summer male on five dates between 9th June and 1st August.

Norfolk One site: pair displaying and nest-building, but then disappeared.

County A Three sites: (1) 'ringtail' on 6th June, two juveniles on 13th August; (2) pair on 8th July; (3) ringtail during 12th-30th July.

County D One site: pair nested twice, one nest deserted and then young in second nest killed by predator, probably stoat *Mustela erminea*.

County M One site: pair hatched five young and reared four.

1980 Humberside One site: male from 28th May to 16th June.

The Montagu's Harrier is not matching the upsurge shown by the Marsh Harrier: perhaps there is less undisturbed farmland than there is undisturbed reedbed habitat.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Sites	5	3	3	4	2	7	4	8	8
Pairs proved breeding	2	0	0	3	1	2	2	2	2
Pairs possibly breeding	5	3	3	5	2	7	4	8	9
Young reared	0	0	0	6	0	3	7	4	4

Birdwatchers can help by (1) not visiting the regular sites unless engaged in official survey for the RSPB or county society, and (2) immediately reporting any new site to the RSPB (Richard Porter or Mike Everett at Sandy (0767) 80551) so that appropriate arrangements can be made with the farmer or landowner.

Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

32 sites: 2-33 pairs breeding.

Argyll Two sites: (1) male on 3rd March; (2) female on 1st August.

Carmarthenshire Two sites: (1) present throughout the year, two on 18th April; (2) male on 26th April, pair on 29th April.

Cumbria Four sites: (1) pair displaying on 14th April, present up to mid June; (2) singly on 22nd April and 14th May; (3) female on 16th May; (4) single on 22nd April; (5) single on 14th May, perhaps same bird as at site 3.

Dunbartonshire/west Stirlingshire One site: pair from 20th July to 4th September.

Durham One site: pair displaying on 25th April and 20th June.

Greater Manchester One site: pair throughout breeding season.

Gwent One site: single on 4th May.

Nottinghamshire One site: single sightings of one female and one probable male.

Pembrokeshire One site: pair displaying on several dates.

Somerset One site: single on 17th April.

County C One site: pair probably bred.

County J One site: pair bred successfully.

County K One site: pair reared young.

County M 'A decrease in the number of records compared with recent years.'

County U Two sites: (1) 'one or two pairs almost certainly present'; (2) pair in display flight on 2nd June.

County V Three sites: (1) pair seen once and singles often; (2) female on 5th May; (3) female on 6th May.

County CC Two sites: (1) pair on 5th April, single seen later; (2) pair.

County EE Two sites: (1) male and female present most of year, no proof of breeding or pairing; (2) female present.

County FF Four sites: (1)-(4) present, but details not released to recorder by observers.

County GG Total of 15 records from 13 sites (January 2, February 4, April 2, June 1, August

2, October 2, November 1 and December 1), but several obviously migrants and ‘no real evidence of breeding’.

County HH One site: pair in spring, male displaying on 31st March.

1975 Perthshire Two sites: (1) single on 18th January and 13th March; (2) female on 3rd August.

1976 Argyll Two sites: (1) pair on 13th March, pair carrying prey and ‘alarming’ in May; (2) single on 8th April and 14th June.

1976 Perthshire Three sites: (1) three adults and one immature on 2nd November; (2) single on 24th July; (3) single on 24th August.

1978 Argyll Three sites: (1) single on 14th April; (2) single on 24th April; (3) single on 25th August.

1978 Perthshire One site: single on 19th March.

1979 Perthshire Two sites: (1) single on 29th July; (2) ‘possible pair’ on 6th April.

The level of presence, as shown by number of counties, number of sites and maximum number of pairs possibly breeding, is being maintained, but the number of instances of confirmed breeding has slumped from the peak of 21 pairs in 1979 to only two in 1981, an all-time low since these reports started. This is a logical consequence of the pressures (shooting, egg-collecting and removal of young) described by Dr M. Marquiss and Dr I. Newton in their paper on ‘The Goshawk in Britain’ (*Brit. Birds* 75: 243-260), but it is possible that some further reports of confirmed breeding have not yet been submitted to the Panel.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Counties	6	10	14	10	15	18	20	19	21
Sites	12	20	32	28	33	37	36	26	32
Pairs proved breeding	6	9	5	12	15	14	21	6	2
Pairs possibly breeding	12	21	34	28	37	40	43	32	33

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

25 sites: 22 pairs laid eggs, 20 pairs reared total of 42 young.

Inverness-shire Loch Garten: pair reared two young (one egg failed to hatch).

Perthshire Loch of the Lowes: pair reared three young.

Elsewhere in Scotland 23 pairs: 20 laid eggs and 18 bred successfully, rearing 37 young (5 × 3, 9 × 2 and 4 × 1).

1973 County K One site: single for some weeks from 18th May and on 18th July.

Momentum has been maintained: for the third successive year we can take pleasure in saying ‘This was the most successful year this century, with record numbers both of successful pairs and of young reared.’



	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Pairs	16	14	14	14	20	22	25	25	25
Successful pairs	10	10	7	10	7	11	16	19	20
Young reared	21	20	16	20	13	19	30	41	42

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

158 sites: 51-160 pairs breeding, with 45 pairs rearing at least 89 young.

Avon Two sites: (1) pair attacking Carrion Crows *Corvus corone* and entering wood on 8th June; (2) pair on 16th June, nest site located later, single adult on 12th September.

Bedfordshire One site: single on 16th July.

Berkshire Four sites: (1) two pairs, one failed, outcome of other not known; (2) pair summered; (3) single on 24th May; (4) single on 29th June.

Cambridgeshire Nine sites: (1) pair bred; (2)-(9) reports in May-June.

Devon One site: pair attempted to breed, nest deserted. We regret that other records were withheld from the Panel.

Dorset 12 sites: (1)-(12) '12 pairs, a few pairs raised three young, two nests failed.'

Essex Two sites: (1) pair reared three young; (2) single on 10th June.

Gloucestershire Two sites: (1) pair, two or three flying young seen; (2) pair, displaying on 24th May, sightings throughout breeding season.

Hampshire 20 sites outside New Forest: (1)(2) pairs each reared three young; (3)-(5) pairs each reared two young; (6) pair reared at least one young; (7) pair probably bred; (8) one or two during 7th-13th August; (9)-(20) 'records indicative of possible breeding'. For New Forest, where, in the past, 15-25 pairs have been estimated: 'Little meaningful data available at present.'

Herefordshire Three sites: (1) pair and juvenile; (2) pair and juvenile, perhaps same as at site 1; (3) single.

Hertfordshire Six sites: (1) pair frequently in June; (2) pair displaying on 4th June; (3) pair calling and displaying on 29th August; (4) pair on four dates from 26th July to 16th August; (5) singly on five dates from 19th May to 5th July; (6) single on 28th June.

Huntingdonshire Three sites: (1) pair regularly from 12th May to 23rd July; (2) three 'apparently in territorial dispute in suitable breeding area' on 9th May, not followed up; (3) seen singly from 28th June to 14th August.

Kent Two sites: (1) pair reared at least one young; (2) pair from late May to late August, 'probably raised two young', but breeding not proved.

Leicestershire Two sites: (1) pair reared three young; (2) after three records earlier in summer, three (thought to be one adult and two recently fledged young) during 5th-7th September.

Lincolnshire/south Humberside Eight sites: (1)-(8) records of singles between 25th June and 15th August 'all near farmland with shelter belts and copses. The increase in county records since 1976 is well pronounced, most previous records being of spring adults ... this will hopefully lead to full colonisation.'

Nottinghamshire Two sites: (1) pair reared two young; (2) adult with two juveniles. 'Widespread sightings suggest possibility of other sites.'

Oxfordshire Nine sites: (1) heard in mid August, noisy pair with juvenile on 1st-2nd September; (2) pair proved breeding; (3)-(8) pairs probably breeding; (9) pair possibly breeding.

Somerset 24 sites: (1) pair reared two or three young; (2) pair reared one or two young; (3) pair with two young on 27th August; (4) 'breeding seems certain' (counted here as probable); (5) pair displaying; (6) seen frequently in July-August; (7) single carrying food on 1st August, two in September; (8)-(24) singles or sometimes two on various dates from May to September.

Suffolk Four sites: (1) single mobbed observer on one date in July; (2) single on 29th June at previous nesting site; (3) single from 15th May to 10th June; (4) single on 26th July.

Surrey 12 sites: (1)-(3) pairs reared three young; (4) pair reared two or perhaps three young; (5)-(7) pairs reared two young; (8) pair reared one young; (9) one or probably two pairs throughout season, both unsuccessful; (10) one or two individuals present; (11)(12) singles present.

Sussex, East Two sites: (1)(2) pairs reared two young.

Sussex, West Three sites: (1) pair reared one or two young; (2) pair feeding two young in early August; (3) pair present.

Warwickshire Five sites: (1)-(4) 'four pairs raised nine young'; (5) sightings suggest at least one additional pair.

Wiltshire 15 sites: (1) pair reared three young; (2)(3) pairs reared two young; (4)-(12) pairs probably breeding; (13)-(15) pairs possibly breeding.

Worcestershire One site: pair 'believed bred', flying young seen nearby in autumn, but no proof that they were bred locally.

County G Two sites: (1) scattered sightings suggest presence of pair; (2) four in late August, perhaps family party, but perhaps not bred locally.

County H Two sites: (1) one or two throughout summer; (2) two in mid August.

Monitoring continues to be hampered by the virtual absence of information from Devon and the New Forest. The trends known to us are summarised below, but all of the figures should be regarded as minima.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Pairs proved breeding	24	47	38	59	51	70	80	64	51
Pairs possibly breeding	65	96	133	143	119	156	132	155	160
Young reared	24	51	42	69	78	96	72	86	89

It is noteworthy that breeding success was better in 1981 than in any previous year (1.74 young per proved breeding pair). Guessing that there may be another dozen breeding pairs both in Devon and in the New Forest, one can assess the known British population in 1981 at 75-180 pairs (probably around 100), with 130-175 young being reared. It would be helpful not to have to guess.

Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*

Four sites: 0-9 pairs breeding.

Cambridgeshire Two sites: (1) male singing from 20th May, two from 22nd May, last heard 7th June; (2) male singing on 26th/27th May.

Suffolk One site: male singing during 5th-9th May.

County A One site: male singing during 15th-18th May, up to five singing during 4th-10th June.

1976 Inverness-shire One site: single singing during 21st-25th June.

No discoverer of a singing Spotted Crake should try to find the nest, since habitat disturbance would be unavoidable. The best chance of proving breeding would probably come from dusk and dawn visits near a stretch of open water and mud within the probable breeding area. Even singing males are scarce, but there does seem to be an encouraging trend:

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Sites	0	4	0	2	4	6	4	3	4
Singing males	0	5	0	2	7	6	8	4	9

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

Seven sites: successful breeding at four sites, 201-203 pairs rearing 155-160 young.

Essex One site: singly on 14th June and 21st June.

Lancashire One site: two during 11th-19th May, certainly did not breed.

Norfolk Two sites: (1) 26 pairs reared 30-35 young; (2) pair reared three young.

Suffolk Three sites: (1) on Havergate Island, at least 115 pairs reared at least 68 young; (2) at Minsmere, 58 pairs reared 54 young; (3) three pairs present, but only one pair hatched young and outcome unknown.



It was another good year, with, for the second successive year, numbers of breeding pairs and of young reared being the highest for over 150 years:

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Breeding sites	4	4	6	5	6	3	3	5	5
Breeding pairs (minimum)	149	125	158	151	146	145	147	168	201
Breeding pairs (maximum)	149	125	158	151	146	145	156	180	203
Young reared (minimum)	115	64	142	68	14	92	99	101	155

The population is still very vulnerable, with 86% at the two original sites, but it is pleasing to see the build-up at the third main site (4-5-8-20-26 in the past five years).

Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedichnemus*

71 sites: 10-83 pairs breeding.

Berkshire Three sites: (1) pair with two young; (2) pair bred, probably reared three young; (3) present in summer.

Cambridgeshire Ten sites: (1)-(10) occupied territories, but no proof of breeding.

Dorset One site: four pairs all bred successfully, but some not until third attempt.

Essex Three sites: (1) two pairs, at least one successful; (2)(3) occupied territories, but perhaps both refer to site 1.

Hampshire No records submitted to the Panel; 50 pairs were estimated in 1975.

Hertfordshire Four sites: (1) pair with two juveniles in July; (2) single on 8th April and up to three on 21st July; (3)(4) occupied territories, but perhaps these refer to sites 1 and 2.

Norfolk 30 sites: (1)-(30) present; 'undoubtedly many others not recorded'.

Oxfordshire Two sites: (1)(2) single sightings.

Suffolk Ten sites: (1) pair and two juveniles on 21st June; (2) five pairs; (3) four pairs; (4) two pairs; (5)-(7) single pairs; (8)(9) singly on single dates in June; (10) occupied territory, but perhaps refers to one of other nine sites.

Sussex, West One site: pair on 2nd June.

Wiltshire Seven sites: (1) pair laid eggs; (2)-(7) pairs probably breeding.

Excluding Hampshire and Norfolk, for which we have very patchy figures, the totals reported to the Panel have been as follows:

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Pairs proved breeding	26	28	47	16	4	20	34	8	10
Pairs possibly breeding	90	67	72	109	27	34	81	45	53

It should be noted, however, that neither of the two main habitats of Stone-curlew—extensive farmland with huge fields and military training areas—is helpful to the would-be censuser. The species' crepuscular and nocturnal habits, with the song period often reaching a peak after midnight, also create difficulties, so that casual observations do not reflect the true situation. J. L. F. Parslow estimated the population at 200-400 pairs in 1967 (*Breeding Birds of Britain and Ireland*, 1973) and Dr J. T. R. Sharrock assessed the 1968-72 numbers at 300-500 pairs (*The Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland*, 1976). There has certainly been a contraction in range since then, and perhaps a decrease in numbers. We made a guess last year that the 1980 population was 'around 150 pairs', though admitted that even this could be a serious underestimate. A recent study has suggested that there are currently about 300 pairs in southern England: 100 in Dorset/

Wiltshire/Hampshire and 200 in Cambridgeshire/Essex/Hertfordshire/Norfolk/Suffolk (unpublished report to the NCC).

Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*

Totals cannot be calculated from the data available.

Angus One site: present but no details available.

Borders None reported.

Grampian 'Study area in the Cairngorms and East Grampians had the usual adult stocks with stable numbers. Much poorer than average success in East Grampians, but better than average success in Cairngorms.'

Inverness-shire Two sites: (1) two on 12th May; (2) single on 11th May; both regarded as migrants.

Perthshire Two sites: (1) male possibly with young on 2nd July, two juveniles on 1st August, but perhaps reared elsewhere; (2) single and three females on 12th June.

1979 County M Four sites: (1) male and nest with three eggs in mid-late June, male brooding on 1st July, nest empty on 13th July; (2) male giving distraction display on 12th July; (3) two, probably both males, on 20th July; (4) female on 6th June.

As usual, the details available to us from the main area are so meagre that we cannot even guess at trends. In the peripheral areas, however, 1981 seems to have been a poor year:

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Counties	1	1	3	3	5	4	4	3	3
Sites	1	1	7	4	7	7	8	4	5
Pairs proved breeding	0	1	3	3	4	5	6	4	0
Pairs possibly breeding	1	1	7	11	12	20	19	14	7

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

One site: single sighting.

County D One site: single on 17th July.

It is probable that data for other regular sites will be submitted in due course.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Sites	1	2	1	2	3	3	4	5	1
Pairs proved breeding	0	0	0	1	0	1	2	1	0
Pairs possibly breeding	2	3	2	4	6	6	6	6	1

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*

One site: single sighting.

Scotland One site: single on 25th May.

No data were received concerning the site where breeding took place in 1978, 1979 and 1980.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

Ten sites: 0-13 females breeding.

Cambridgeshire Two sites: (1) lek involving up to 12 males in April-June, one female 'showing brooding behaviour', two females thought to have probably bred; (2) a few males in April-May, but no real lek.

Essex Three sites: (1) 20 on 20th June; (2) five on 27th June; (3) single on 30th May; all assumed to be migrants/non-breeders.

Humberside One site: up to eight males and three females from 4th-21st May, display on several dates.

Kent One site: 'present, breeding suspected'.

Lancashire One site: up to 12 males and four females at lek in May and three males and three females in June.

Suffolk One site: up to 20 at lek in May, and up to 45 during breeding season, 'breeding may have taken place nearby'.

Outer Hebrides One site: up to four males and one or two females present most of summer, much display, may have bred.

1973 Argyll One site: single on 7th June.

1974 Argyll One site: male from 30th July to 6th August.

1975 Argyll One site: pair displaying on 18th May.

1978 Argyll One site: single from 26th April to 10th May.

Although breeding was not proved in 1981, this does not necessarily mean that it did not occur: observers are commendably loth to disturb areas where Ruffs may be nesting.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Sites	2	2	5	6	6	4	12	10	10
Pairs proved breeding	0	2	2	4	0	0	3	3	0
Max. no. females breeding	8	12	27	17	16	4	22	13	13

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

Five sites: 22-26 pairs breeding.

Cambridgeshire Two sites: (1) nine breeding pairs, tenth pair and three singles also present in survey during 21st-31st May, 'many juveniles in June'; (2) on the Ouse Washes 'Spring flooding caused disastrous breeding season, with only one chick confirmed as raised, and a few others from adjacent fields' (counted here as two pairs proved breeding).

Norfolk One site: four pairs each raised young.

Somerset One site: five pairs nested, four successfully reared young.

Suffolk One site: two pairs nested, at least two young reared.

1974 County H Two sites: (1) single on 27th May; (2) single on 13th June.

Not only did the flooding on the Ouse Washes result in a 'disastrous breeding season' there, but it was also a meagre year elsewhere, with the number of occupied sites being the lowest for over 20 years:

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Sites	9	12	10	13	11	13	13	11	5
Pairs proved breeding	55	51	63	72	37	50	39	52	22
Pairs possibly breeding	61	58	71	87	70	68	64	77	26

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

One site: one pair bred.

Inverness-shire One site: pair bred, brood seen.

1974 Perthshire One site: single on 17th June.

Unless there are other records still to be submitted, 1981 was the worst year since 1973, when only three single individuals were seen.

	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Sites	5	3	4	5	3	4	7	3	4	1
Pairs proved breeding	5	0	1	2	1	2	4	2	7	1
Pairs possibly breeding	8	3	5	6	3	5	10	4	12	1

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

Six sites: 24-38 pairs breeding.

Outer Hebrides Five sites: (1) two pairs from 6th June to 31st July 'apparently breeding'; (2) up to seven individuals, probably three pairs, no young seen; (3) at least three pairs, young seen; (4) seven individuals reported; (5) present at former site.

Shetland One site: 21-24 pairs, thought to have hatched 18 clutches.

1974 Shetland ADDITION: increase number of pairs from 'nine to 14' to 'ten to 16'.

1977 Shetland ADDITIONAL DATA: 19 clutches thought to have hatched.

1978 Shetland ADDITIONAL DATA: nine clutches thought to have hatched.

1979 Shetland ADDITIONAL DATA: ten clutches thought to have hatched.

1980 Shetland ADDITIONAL DATA: 18 clutches thought to have hatched.

Numbers have changed remarkably little in recent years (the Shetland population was not counted in 1973), but it is disappointing that the spread to new sites which was apparently occurring in 1978-79 has had a setback. In the following table, the figures have been recalculated:

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Sites	5	6	9	3	7	8	12	6	6
Pairs proved breeding	2	11	18	17	22	22	23	24	24
Pairs possibly breeding	7	21	31	21	31	36	40	32	38

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*

Four sites: 3-6 pairs breeding, but only one young reared.

Essex One site: adult from March to June, first-summer on 20th June.

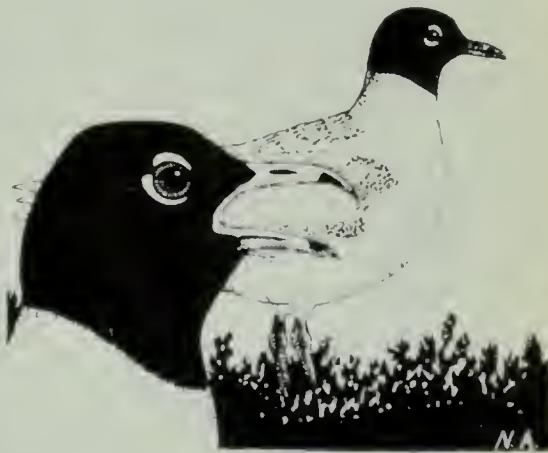
Hampshire One site: single from 15th March to mid May.

Suffolk One site: up to two adults on 5th-6th June.

County B One site: three pairs bred, only one young fledged.

The best year yet, but not much success.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Sites	0	0	0	1	2	1	3	5	4
Pairs proved breeding	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	1	3
Max. no. pairs or singles	0	0	0	1	2	1	3	5	6



Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca*

One site: four females, one laying unfertilised clutch.

Shetland One site: on Fetlar, up to four females present, one laid eggs, but later abandoned them; no male present.

Breeding was annual during 1967-75, but no male has been present since.

Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

No 1981 records.

1976 Sussex, West One site: first heard on 30th May, adult carrying food on 29th June, nest found on 1st July, juvenile sticking head out of nest-hole on 11th July, one juvenile left nest on 17th July, last sighting on 27th July.

The events in 1977 remain unique.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Sites	0	0	1	2	4	4	0	2	0
Pairs proved breeding	0	0	0	1	4	0	0	0	0
Pairs possibly breeding	0	0	1	2	4	4	0	2	0

Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

Two sites: 0-2 pairs breeding.

County B One site: pair, breeding not proved.

County C One site: male, at least, present from 24th April into June, two individuals on 5th September.

1974 Perthshire One site: single on 14th July.

1978 Perthshire One site: single found dying beside road on 11th May.

Unless there are others not yet reported to us, 1981 was the worst year ever and the first with no confirmed breeding:

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Sites	3	6	10	7	17	22	7	11	2
Pairs proved breeding	2	1	3	1	7	4	1	1	0
Pairs possibly breeding	3	6	10	7	19	23	9	14	2

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*

One site: male held territory for eight days.

Humberside One site: male white-spotted *L. s. cyanecula* singing and displaying during 12th-19th May.

1979 Nottinghamshire Male (apparently lacking spot) singing and holding territory for six weeks, from early April to 12th May.

1980 Nottinghamshire DELETION: record (*Brit. Birds* 75: 171) referred to 1979, see above.

We live in hope!

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Singing males	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

Records not collected for 1981.

1976 Huntingdonshire Second site: (2) pair reared young; perhaps these were those seen at site 1 in July-August.

This late record raises the 1976 totals to 34-82 pairs breeding at 53 sites. The Panel listed records during 1973-76 and continues to publish additions and corrections for those four years.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

Six sites: 0-6 pairs breeding.

Borders One site: territorial pair throughout May and into mid June.

Cumbria One site: male on 30th May.

Grampian One site: pair on 17th May, one on 24th May.

Perthshire Two sites: (1) two or more on 19th July; (2) singly on 27th May and 8th June.

Sutherland One site: pair during 3rd-16th May.

1975 Derbyshire One site: pair with four recently fledged young on 28th-29th June.

1978 Derbyshire One site: pair carrying food in summer, perhaps a second pair present.

1980 Yorkshire, South One site: nest containing about five young almost ready to fly on 7th June.

Rather than the expected consolidation and expansion, colonisation seems to be petering out.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Sites	3	8	10	11	6	3	6	5	6
Pairs proved breeding	2	3	2	3	4	1	1	1	0
Pairs possibly breeding	3	7	10	12	6	4	6	5	6

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

Four sites: 1-7 pairs breeding.

Sutherland Three sites: (1) adult carrying food into plantation on 9th July; (2) agitated adult on 9th September; (3) at least one pair, male singing several times during 3rd-16th May.

Inverness-shire One site: 'one pair probably bred and a few other singing males heard' ('a few' is taken here as three).

1974 Kent One site: adult carrying food to young in nest.

1979 County B One site: adult dead on road on 26th July.

Unless further records come to light, 1981 was the worst year for more than a decade.

	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Sites	?	11	28	25	10	10	12	6	18	4
Pairs proved breeding	12	4	4	13	3	2	3	2	7	1
Pairs possibly breeding	42	12	28	53	15	16	17	9	32	7

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

59 sites: 56-162 pairs breeding.

Berkshire One site: single singing on 16th July.

Cambridgeshire Two sites: (1) four singing in spring, later presence of juveniles confirmed breeding; (2) single singing on 19th May.

Cornwall Three sites: (1) two singing during 22nd-24th April, pair bred, two juveniles on 14th July; (2) two males on 30th April and 9th May, one on 10th June; (3) singles singing on 22nd March and 27th September.

Devon Eight sites: (1) 20-25 breeding pairs resident; (2) two or three breeding pairs resident; (3) three from January to April, four trapped during September to November; (4) present throughout breeding season, single singing on 3rd June; (5) single on 21st

February; (6) ones and twos during January, February and October to December; (7) three on 25th January, two singing on 28th February, one on 28th October; (8) single singing on 9th May.

Dorset Seven sites: (1) nine singing males, 21 females, 66 young fledged; (2) five singing males; (3) four singing males; (4)(5) three singing males; (6)(7) single singing males.

Essex Two sites: (1) two pairs bred successfully, third pair seen at nest; (2) single singing on 24th May, two singing on 29th May, three singing from 6th to 13th June, one still singing on 28th June.

Hampshire Seven sites: (1) pair reared at least two young; (2) pair reared two young; (3) eight pairs estimated; (4) two pairs probably bred; (5)-(7) single pairs probably bred.

Hertfordshire Five sites: (1) one or two all year, one brood seen; (2) single on 16th April, male singing from 1st May to early June, one or two carrying food on 12th June; (3) male from 14th April, female from 28th April, pair feeding two young on 1th July; (4) three singing males in June; (5) singing male during 14th-21st August.



Huntingdonshire One site: female with brood-patch trapped.
Isle of Wight Two sites: (1) singing during April-July and October-November; (2) heard on 21st June.
Kent Six sites: (1)-(6) survey of east Kent lowlands showed 80 pairs probably breeding and 18 broods in the main area.
Middlesex/Greater London One site: singing male from 23rd May to 12th July.
Norfolk Ten sites: (1) one pair bred (three juveniles ringed) and second pair probably bred; (2)-(10) total of 29 pairs probably bred: 14, 6, 2, 2, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1.
Somerset Two sites: (1) singing male and female with brood-patch trapped, present April to June; (2) two singing males on 15th November, where not present in breeding season.
Suffolk Seven sites: (1) two pairs proved breeding, three additional singing males; (2) one or two singing from 12th March to late July, three singing in autumn; (3)-(7) total of seven singing during April-June: 2, 2, 1, 1, 1.
County A One site: single singing during 15th-27th March.

1979 Glamorgan, West CORRECTION: last date should be 27th April, not 27th August (*Brit. Birds* 75: 173).

1980 Hampshire ADDITIONS: (1) at site where two pairs reared four and two young (*Brit. Birds* 75: 172), one additional singing male; (2) five singing males; (3) male on 14th April, area not revisited; (4) male throughout season; (5) male on 29th June.

The continuing spread is shown by the increases in number of counties and sites occupied in 1981; the drop in the number of pairs possibly breeding may reflect decreasing observer-interest in searching for Cetti's Warblers in the main areas rather than any numerical decrease in singing Cetti's Warblers.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Counties	2	3	3	8	10	14	14	11	16
Sites (excluding Kent)	1	3	8	14	32	41	33	50	59
Pairs proved breeding	1	5	8	8	13	30	46	19	56
Pairs possibly breeding	14	16	75	80	153	174	163	198	162

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*

Eight sites: 5-15 pairs breeding.

Dorset One site: singing male from 30th April to 2nd May.
Hampshire One site: pair from 13th April to at least 16th June.
Kent One site: four singing males, three pairs, two confirmed breeding.
Norfolk Three sites: (1) two pairs nested, a third singing male; (2) two singing males; (3) single singing male.
Suffolk Two sites: (1) male from 22nd April, one pair bred; (2) two singing males from 15th April to 27th June, sporadic records until 25th August.

There seems to have been something of a setback in 1981, with the lowest totals for five years.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Sites	4	5	3	8	13	15	15	14	8
Pairs proved breeding	0	1	1	0	3	4	6	2	5
Pairs possibly breeding	13	8	3	9	26	28	30	29	15

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*

Outside main area, three sites: 0-3 pairs breeding.

Gloucestershire One site: singing male on 1st July.
Isle of Wight One site: single seen and heard on 25th April and 3rd July.
Worcestershire 'Surprisingly few reports, with no singing males away from the main stronghold; no details, but understood to be no change in status.'
County D One site: singing male during 6th-30th June.

The last available figures for the main Worcestershire stronghold are the 50-60 pairs estimated from 46 singing males counted in 1977(*Brit. Birds* 72: 378). If regular monitoring of numbers in this area is being maintained, we ask those responsible to supply details to the county recorder and to the Panel; if this isolated population is not being counted each year, we suggest that local ornithologists should initiate an annual organised census by a small group of careful specialists.

Outside the main area, 1981 was the worst year since these reports started:

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Sites	9	6	3	5	6	15	15	8	3
Pairs proved breeding	5	0	0	0	2	4	1	2	0
Pairs possibly breeding	15	7	5	5	11	15	23	12	3

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*

Two sites: two singing males.

Cambridgeshire One site: singing male from 24th May to 17th June.

Gloucestershire One site: singing male from 31st May to 28th June.

1975 Hampshire One site: singing male from 20th May to 1st June.

1975 Shetland One site: singing male from 8th June to 8th July.

1980 Hampshire One site: singing male from 26th May to 4th June.

Vagrant Great Reed Warblers often sing in spring (indeed, are unlikely to be discovered otherwise), so we have noted in these reports only the long-staying individuals:

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Singing males	0	0	2	1	0	1	1	1	2

Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*

One site: single singing male.

Huntingdonshire One site: singing male during at least 6th-30th June.

This species has not previously appeared in our reports.



Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*

Outside the New Forest, 33 sites: 50-119 pairs breeding.

Cornwall Six sites: (1)-(4) single pairs bred; (5) present in early summer; (6) one or two pairs.

Devon One site: pair on 4th April, male singing then and on 30th April.

Dorset Ten sites: (1)-(6) at least 42 pairs: 20, 10, 8, 2 or more, 1, 1; (7) probably at least one pair; (8)-(10) probably single pairs.

Hampshire No information for New Forest. Elsewhere, six sites: (1) two pairs each reared

young; (2) two or three pairs reared young; (3) two males on 16th April, not seen again; (4)-(6) singles on 16th February, 20th February and 14th March.

Isle of Wight One site: singly on 8th May and 6th June.

Surrey Eight sites: (1) 16 pairs, majority reared young; (2) 13-15 pairs, majority reared young; (3) ten pairs, majority reared young, at least three reared two broods; (4) three pairs bred, a fourth male present; (5) pair bred, second singing male present; (6) pair reared young; (7) two males in summer; (8) male in summer.

Sussex, West One site: three pairs, two proved breeding, one with four young and other seen carrying food to nest.

The 1981 totals compare favourably with those for other recent years, but annual totals cannot be calculated consistently because of the difficulty of making assessments when numbers are high.

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus*

35 sites: 15-102 pairs breeding.

Berkshire Three sites: (1)-(3) three, two and one singing males.

Buckinghamshire Four sites: (1) singing males: first on 28th March, nine in April, at least 14 in June; (2) singing male on 29th June; (3) at least one, possibly two, on 31st August; (4) single on 28th March.

Derbyshire One site: pair bred, singing male on 30th May, pair feeding about five newly fledged young on 20th June, first county breeding record.

Devon One site: female trapped on 13th May, male trapped on 21st June.

Dorset Three sites: (1) pair throughout May, one on three dates in June; (2) singing male on 5th May and again two weeks later; (3) pair from 30th January to 10th March and one on 15th May.

Essex Three sites: (1) singing male throughout May; (2)(3) single singing males, both on 6th June.

Hampshire Five sites: (1) 14 singing males located in thorough survey; (2) pair throughout breeding season; (3) pair; (4)(5) single singing males.

Hertfordshire Three sites: (1) singing male from 10th May to 11th July; (2)(3) single singing males on 5th April and on 12th May.

Kent Two sites: (1) 36 occupied territories, at least 28 pairs, 13 broods; (2) two singing males on 8th and 21st June.

Oxfordshire Two sites: (1) adult with party of young; (2) 'reported to have bred' (counted as only probable).

Staffordshire Two sites: (1) singing male on 1st, 5th and 21st-27th March; (2) singing male in June, ringed, joined by second individual in October, both still present at end of year.

Suffolk Three sites: (1) two singing males in May-June; (2)(3) single singing males on 17th April and on 27th May.

Sussex, East One site: two males and one female.

Worcestershire Two sites: (1) pair, singing male from 3rd May to at least 20th June; (2) singing male on 20th April.

1975 Middlesex/Greater London One site: singing male from 22nd May to 1st June.

1976 Middlesex/Greater London Additional site: (3) singing male on 16th May.



After the depressing decline from 1975 to 1978, numbers were back in 1981 almost to the peak 1975 figures. Three sites, in Kent, Hampshire and Buckinghamshire, held 63% of the population. It does seem likely that other such concentrations remain to be discovered elsewhere.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Sites	5	13	32	15	12	7	25	30	35
Pairs proved breeding	2	1	4	4	2	1	9	7	15
Pairs possibly breeding	18	37	123	28	31	11	73	78	102

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

13 sites: 4-26 pairs breeding; probably only one breeding site.

Hertfordshire Four sites: (1) female on 5th July, pair on 8th July; (2) male during 17th-20th April; (3) male on 30th-31st May; (4) singing male on 28th June.

Kent Three sites: (1) two from mid May to early July; (2) two from 12th May to 7th June; (3) single in late May.

Lincolnshire/south Humberside One site: singing male during 17th-19th June and on 4th July.

Somerset Three sites: (1) singing male on 14th May; (2) male on 23rd May; (3) subadult male on 28th June.

Suffolk Two sites: (1) 12-14 pairs, two nests found, family parties of 4, 4, 3 and 2; (2) single on 4th June.

1979 Glamorgan, West CORRECTION: singing male on 16th (not 15th) May.

Despite the apparent continued absence from 'County A' since 1976, when there were at least 24 individuals at four sites, and the disappointing cessation of breeding in Kent (last in 1979), numbers seem to be holding up. All observers are, however, asked to avoid any disturbance at possible breeding sites. At least two of the Suffolk territories were subjected to undergrowth trampling in 1981, although most visiting birdwatchers did keep to public rights of way.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Sites	2	3	4	11	16	14	17	17	13
Pairs proved breeding	1	2	2	7	6	7	3	2	4
Pairs possibly breeding	8	4	7	23	21	28	30	28	26

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

At least 19 sites: 10-39 pairs breeding.

Carmarthenshire One site: male (regularly) and female (occasionally) from 8th July to 5th August.

Essex One site: pair reared four young.

Hampshire Two sites: (1) male from 20th May to 8th July; (2) female from 5th June to early August.

Norfolk Three to five sites: (1) pair bred successfully; (2) pair proved breeding; (3) pair reared four young; (4) pair reared at least one young; (5) pair present, but breeding not confirmed. (Unknown overlap between sites 1-2 and 3-5, and between sites 1-5 and the Norfolk/Suffolk entry.)

Norfolk/Suffolk Six sites: (1)-(6) single pairs nested, five rearing a total of 19 young.

Suffolk 13 sites: (1) six pairs nested, three robbed by egg-collectors; (2)(3) pairs each reared four young; (4)(5) pairs each reared three young; (6) pair present, but breeding not confirmed; (7) three pairs, one male feeding juveniles on 25th June; (8) two pairs; (9) female in mid June; (10)-(13) single males on 26th May, on 5th June, on 16th June and on 23rd June. (Unknown degree of overlap between sites 1 and 2-6, and between sites 1-6 and the Norfolk/Suffolk entry.)

1973 Gwent Two sites: (1) single during 2nd-9th June; (2) single on 17th June.

1973 Hampshire Three sites: (1)-(3) three pairs proved breeding, two reared young.

1980 Gwent DELETION: records (*Brit. Birds* 75: 175) referred to 1973, see above.

1980 Hampshire DELETION: records (*Brit. Birds* 75: 175) referred to 1973, see above.

It is disappointing that the colonisation of Scotland, which seemed to be imminent in 1977-79, has not materialised. The possible duplication (or even triplication) with the Norfolk/Suffolk records makes the 1981 figures

very unreliable; we hope that this problem will eventually be resolved.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Counties	8	8	7	5	13	11	10	5	5
Pairs proved breeding	30	30	51	3	48	13	14	23	10
Pairs possibly breeding	48	52	56	25	64	37	52	31	39

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*

No relevant records in 1981.

1977 Inverness-shire One site: singing male in early May.

1978 Gwent One site: male singing on 14th May.

A disappointing reverse:

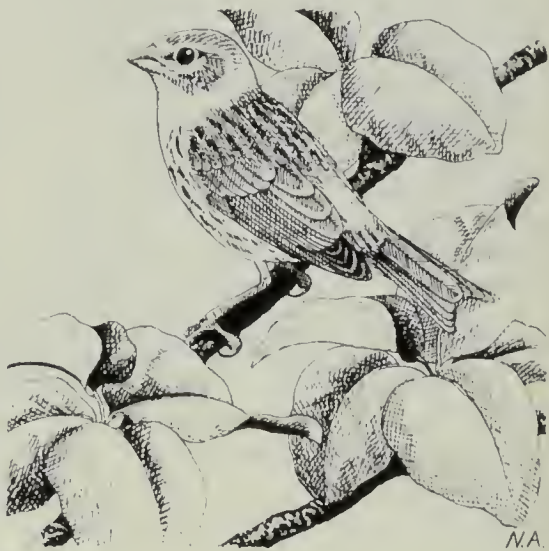
	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Sites	1	0	0	0	2	2	3	3	0
Pairs proved breeding	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Pairs possibly breeding	1	0	0	0	3	2	4	4	0

Serin *Serinus serinus*

Three sites: 2-6 pairs breeding.

Devon Three sites: (1) present from 21st April to 28th August, pair reared six young from two broods (3 and 3), second singing male present; (2) present from 12th April to 29th July, pair reared at least three young, at least one extra singing male; (3) present from 9th April to 10th July, two singing males and a probable female, breeding probably attempted but presumed unsuccessful.

These—only the fourth and fifth instances of proved breeding in Britain—give hope that the long-awaited colonisation may develop from this Devon nucleus. The previous instances were in Dorset in 1967, East Sussex in 1969 and Devon in 1978 (*Brit. Birds* 61: 357; 63: 290; 72: 541).



	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Sites	0	0	0	2	0	4	0	1	3
Pairs proved breeding	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
Pairs possibly breeding	0	0	0	2	0	4	0	1	6

Lapland Bunting *Calcarius lapponicus*

One site: single seen.

Scotland One site: single on 21st June.

After four years with confirmed breeding, 1981 was disappointing:

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Sites	0	1	0	0	6	3	5	1	1
Pairs proved breeding	0	0	0	0	2	2	11	1	0
Pairs possibly breeding	0	1	0	0	16	6	14	1	1

Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Two sites: 2-11 pairs breeding.

Grampian Two sites: (1) seven males, young seen; (2) four males, young seen. An observer who regularly covers this area but who never reports any details to the county recorder commented: 'About average stock in Cairngorms. Good breeding, several second broods reared.'

1974 Argyll One site: first-year male and female present.

1974 Perth DELETION: record (*Brit. Birds* 68: 503) referred to Argyll (see above).

1979 Cumbria One site: three individuals in mid July.

1979 County F One site: male singing and female carrying lood on 11th July.

Whilst general statements do help to fill in the picture, we should like to encourage all observers to submit data (and not merely opinions and generalisations) so that annual fluctuations can be monitored. The following table summarises the information supplied to us, but the quality for the main area has varied from year to year.

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Sites	5	7	13	1	5	3	13	1	2
Pairs proved breeding	6	2	2	4	4	3	7	4	2
Pairs possibly breeding	11	13	20	7	15	6	21	10	11

Girl Bunting *Emberiza cirius*

Outside Devon, 27 sites: 5-31 pairs breeding.

Buckinghamshire Two sites: (1) singing male from 2nd March to 21st April; (2) single on 11th February, 'in spring' and on 13th December. Recorder appeals to anyone who has observations at these sites to report them to him.

Cornwall Six sites: (1) two pairs bred; (2) pair, nest with one egg on 11th May, male carrying lood on 2nd August; (3) pair, nest-building on 10th June; (4) pair on 10th June; (5)(6) single singing males, both on 28th July.

Devon No information supplied to the Panel.

Durham One site: male from 4th April to 5th June.

Huntingdonshire Two sites: (1) pair, three young and one infertile egg on 20th June; (2) pair on 17th May, not found on 20th June, perhaps same as at site 1.

Somerset 12 sites: (1) pair and two extra singing males during May-July; (2) pair and second singing male on 25th May; (3) pair on 20th-21st April; (4) pair in late May; (5)-(10) single singing males: May-July, 9th May, 8th June, 14th June, mid June, and 5th August; (11) male on 27th March; (12) female on 2nd August.

Surrey One site: singing male throughout breeding season.

Sussex, East Two sites: (1) singing male; (2) female 'seen occasionally'.

Sussex, West One site: 'Occasional sightings suggest presence of a pair somewhere.'

1980 Durham One site: male singing persistently, female 'tentatively identified'.

1980 Lincolnshire/south Humberside DELETION: record (*Brit. Birds* 75: 177) resulted from a transcription error (actually Black-headed Bunting *E. melanocephala*).

This is only the second year that records of this species have been collected by the Panel. Outside the main county (Devon), the totals have been:

	1980	1981
Sites	21	27
Pairs proved breeding	6	5
Pairs possibly breeding	26	31

Identification pitfalls and assessment problems

When making the latest deletions of species from the list of those which it considers (*Brit. Birds* 75: 338), the Rarities Committee decided to outline the problems encountered, mainly for the benefit of the county and regional record committees which will henceforth be assessing the descriptions of claimed records of these species. The Committee's experience concerning the ten deleted species may also be helpful to observers who are not familiar with them. It needs to be stressed that these notes, which will be published over the next year or so, are not intended to cover all facets of the identification of the species concerned, but only the major sources of error likely to mislead the observer in the field or the person attempting to assess the written evidence.

1 Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*

The ideal record of Cory's Shearwater is that submitted by an experienced seawatching enthusiast who has carried out regular seawatches over several preceding weeks. The bird in question will have been seen about half way through an hour's watch (not as soon as observing began, nor after eyestrain resulting from several hours of watching, nor just as everyone was packing up at the end). The Cory's Shearwater will have flown by quite close in (less than 200m away), accompanied by Manx *Puffinus puffinus* or other shearwaters, the odd Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis* and a juvenile Gannet *Sula bassana* or two, in calm weather on a sunny day as several observers (all of whom saw it) watched with binoculars and telescopes on tripods with the sun behind them.

To a jaded and cynical assessor, however, the typical Cory's Shearwater submission sometimes seems to come from an observer unknown to the members of the Rarities Committee, who is new to seawatching, who sees the bird just as it disappears around a headland into the mist; alternatively, the claimed Cory's may be the only bird seen during casual sea-gazing on a sultry afternoon: 'After looking it up in a book, I realised that it must have been a Cory's Shearwater.'

Unfortunately, Cory's Shearwater is the Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin* of the oceans. Apart from its pale bill, it has no striking features, so that descriptions tend to note all the characteristics that were *not* seen, ending up with the conclusion, 'so it must have been a Cory's'. In high winds and heavy seas, the flight can include towering (but so, too, can the flight of Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis*), whereas on calm days Cory's Shearwaters can flap languidly like large gulls *Larus*. Indeed, one of the classic pitfalls is misidentification of an immature Herring *L. argentatus* or Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus*. The other two traps for the novice (and even sometimes for the experienced birder) are wholly or partly silhouetted Fulmars, especially northern, dark-phase individuals, and immature Gannets, especially in second-summer plumage. Both have the slightly-darker-above-than-below appearance of Cory's, and both can, in gales, shear and then tower like large shearwaters. Assessors should ensure that the observer of a claimed Cory's obtained adequate size comparisons with



1. Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*, Greece, August 1982 (T. A. Box)



2. Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*, Greece, July 1980 (R. J. M. Stet)

other species: the Balearic race of Manx *P. p. mauretanicus* can look similar, apart from its smaller size.

Although light conditions can cause variations in colour-appearance, Cory's Shearwater is basically mid-brown above and white below. Birds noted as dark brown above, or dark grey above, probably were not Cory's. A closely observed Cory's can hardly be misidentified, and certainly not

confused with Great Shearwater, which has a very dark 'cap', appearing black, strikingly demarcated from the white side-neck and underparts (*Brit. Birds* 73: plate 5); this text need not, therefore, cover plumage details of Cory's, which are dealt with excellently in textbooks such as the standard fieldguides and *BWP* (1: 136-140) and are shown in photographs such as those by F. Roux (*Brit. Birds* 61: plate 22), Keith Pellow (71: plate 88), T. A. Box (plate 1, above), and René Stet (plate 2, above).

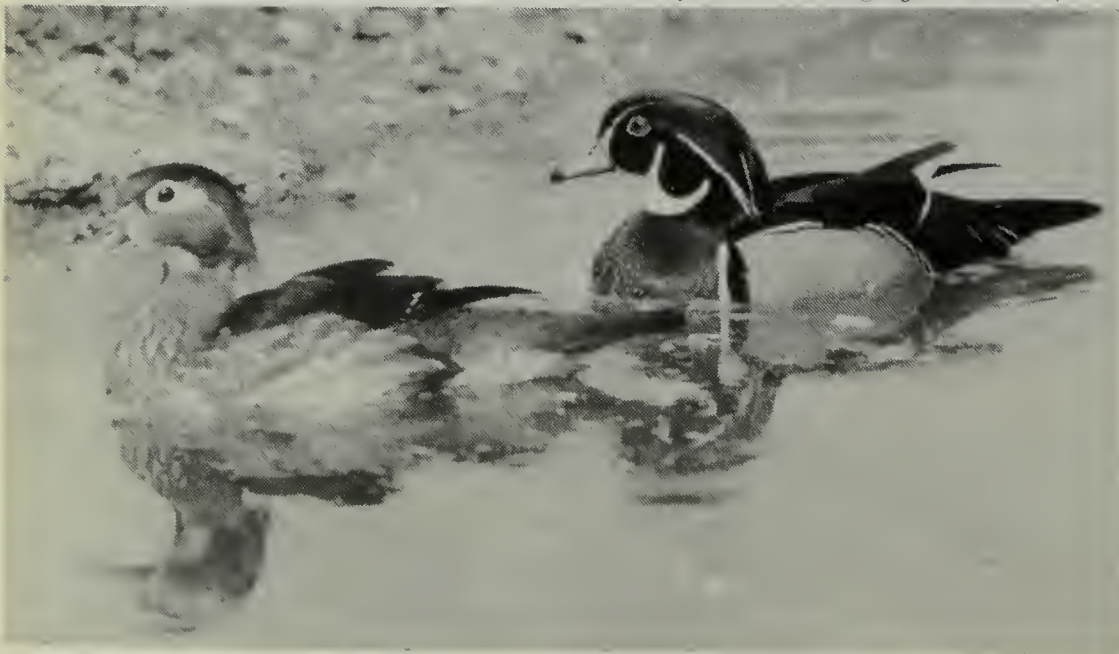
J. T. R. SHARROCK

Mystery photographs

73 Nondescript grey-brown ducks do not always command too much attention; the hope is, frequently, that the all-revealing male is close by! This bird, though, merits a second glance. The familiar mottlings of the female dabbling duck are confined here to the breast and flanks, while the mottles themselves are individually large and distinct. The head is slightly capped, darker above, with a white eye-ring and fine stripe running back from it. This is no dabbling duck, but clearly the female of one of that confusing pair, the Mandarin *Aix galericulata* and Wood Duck *A. sponsa*. Here is one of those classic pairings—Eider *Somateria mollissima* and King Eider *S. spectabilis* is another—where the males are very easy to separate, but the females are decidedly difficult.

Opportunities for birdwatchers to come across these two species in Britain are increasing. The Mandarin has been a breeding bird for a great many years, but, probably because of habitat limitation, especially nesting sites, has been slow to spread from its long-established centres such as Berkshire and Surrey. More and more, though, they are being kept full-winged in waterfowl collections, and are beginning to appear in new places.

3. Adult female and adult male Wood Ducks *Aix sponsa*, Slimbridge (J. B. Blossom)

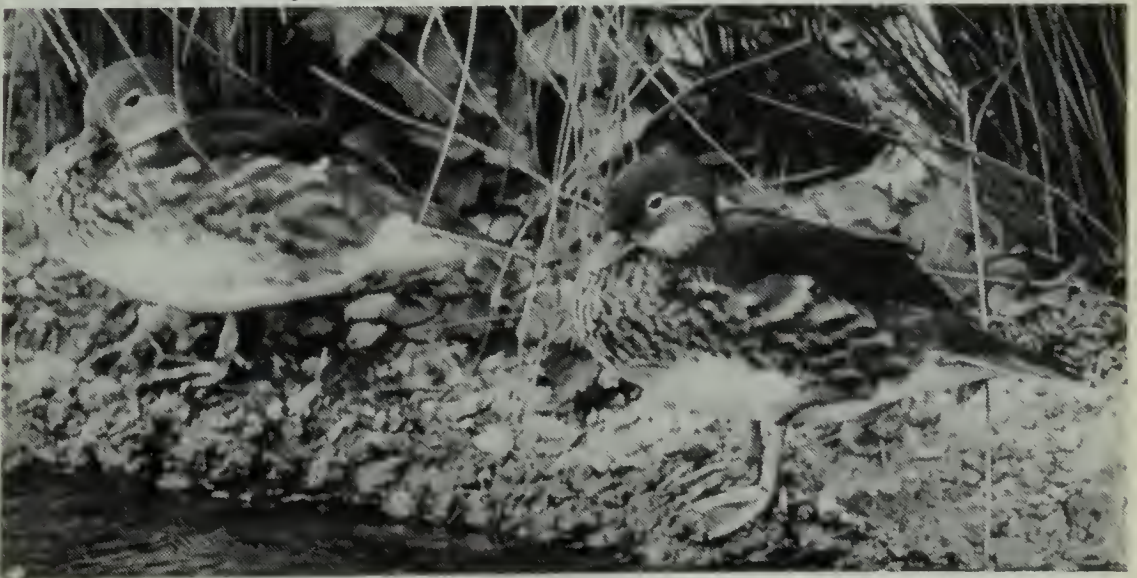


The latter is also true of Wood Ducks, but a feral population does not yet seem to have become properly established, despite many attempts.

The principal distinguishing feature of the Mandarin female is the fine white eye-ring and equally fine stripe curving back from it almost to the nape, giving a pronounced appearance of spectacles (plate 4). The female Wood Duck, on the other hand, featured in last month's photograph and repeated here (plate 3), has an irregular white splodge around the eye, and a much more pronounced stripe leading back from it. Another point to look for, especially at close range, is the colour of the nail at the top of the bill: pale in the Mandarin, dark in the Wood Duck. The amount of white around the base of the bill seems to be variable. The female Mandarin illustrated here lacks any, but many do have it. There is little difference in the flight pattern between the two species. Both have white tips to the secondaries, and a faint whitish bar across the primaries of an otherwise dark wing. This bar, formed by pale outer edgings to the feathers, is more extensive on the Mandarin than on the Wood Duck, but is not always easy to see on either. In flight, the Wood Duck may utter a distinctive 'oo-ee' call, rather owl-like in quality, while the Mandarin may give a sharp, high-pitched quack, but neither species is very vocal in flight, nor at other times, apart from during displays.

There are other differences, of course. The Wood Duck has a broader, longer bill and a less steep forehead. It also tends to be darker on the head and back, and is some 10-15% larger, although the legs seem shorter. But these are comparative points, and, on seeing a duck suspected to be one or the other, it is best to concentrate on the white around the eye. To aid the memory, notice how, like in any good Chinese painting, the Mandarin's white spectacles have been drawn with the finest of brushes. I think, though, that I shall stop there rather than be tempted to go on and draw too many analogies between the cruder patterning of the Wood Duck from North America and any real or supposed transatlantic qualities. MAO

4. Adult female and juvenile male Mandarins *Aix galericulata*, Slimbridge (K. Portman)





5. Mystery photograph 74. Identify the species. Answer next month

Seventy-five years ago...

'LITTLE BUNTING *Emberiza pusilla* Pall.

DURHAM.—A female was procured at Teesmouth on 11th October, 1902, by the late Mr. C. Braithwaite.

WARWICK.—A male in winter plumage was caught with bird-lime at Pailton, near Rugby, in the beginning of October, 1902, and lived in a cage for nearly fifteen months.

SCOTLAND.—A young bird was captured by a cat at the Pentland Skerries Lighthouse on 15th October, 1903. One was seen at close quarters and satisfactorily identified at Fair Isle on 2nd October, 1905, and an adult female was obtained at the same place on 3rd October, 1906.

The Little Bunting had only once previously been identified in this country, viz., at Brighton, on 2nd November, 1846.' (*Brit. Birds* 1: 249, January 1908)

Notes

Use by seabirds of human fishing activities Jeffery Boswall (*Brit. Birds* 70: 79-81) commented that little has been published on the use made by seabirds of human fishing activities. A main factor adduced by the late James Fisher (1952, *The Fulmar*) to explain the increase in the Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis* was the ready source of offal from the fishing fleets in the North Atlantic. The effect on the seabirds when the nets are being drawn in or gutting is in progress is magnetic. At Cap Gris Nez, Pas de Calais, France, inshore fishing vessels frequently operate within sight of the Cap. From the moment that fish are hauled aboard, the large number of gulls *Larus* present in those waters gather around the boat in a screaming mass: all the commoner species are usually represented and, depending on the season, Gannets *Sula bassana*, Kittiwakes *Rissa tridactyla*, Little Gulls *L. minutus*, terns *Sterna* & *Chlidonias*, and skuas *Stercorarius* may also participate, along with the occasional shearwater, usually Manx *Puffinus puffinus*. Many hundreds of gulls will also follow fishing boats returning to Boulogne if gutting is in progress. Similarly, in May 1976, on Lewis, Western Isles, I saw fishing vessels returning south past Tiunpan Head, each followed by a great train of many hundreds of gulls; shortly afterwards, at Stornoway (about 25 km away by sea), I saw the same vessels arriving in port still followed by what were presumably the same gulls. It would be interesting to establish over what distance gulls will follow boats in such circumstances; presumably, all the time food is being made available from the boat, the gulls will stay with it.



The effect of man's fishing activities on the local distribution of seabirds has been less well documented, but it was particularly marked on a passage south from the coast of Brittany to Spain on 2nd October 1974, and on the return north on 13th October, when by far the largest concentrations of seabirds occurred in areas where fishing fleets were active. The aggregate

Table 1. Number of seabirds counted in sectors of the English Channel and Bay of Biscay on two dates combined, 2nd and 13th October 1974

Cormorants *Phalacrocorax carbo* and Shags *P. aristotelis*, and gulls *Larus* ashore, are excluded from the data for area A

Area	Total hours' observation	No. birds counted (rate per hour)	No. of species
A: inshore, among islands off west coast of Brittany; no fishing	4½	226 (50)	8
B: offshore, north coast of Brittany, land visible; no fishing	3½	221 (63)	5
C: offshore, south coast of Brittany, land generally visible; many fishing vessels	4½	1,776 (394)	9
D: offshore, Bay of Biscay, no land visible; no fishing	8¼	285 (34)	11/12

numbers counted in various sectors on the two dates combined are shown in table 1: the larger number in the area where there were many boats is striking, and over six times the highest rate recorded where there were no fleets. The only concentrations away from fishing vessels were occasional feeding parties of Gannets, a species which can exploit fish shoals without the assistance of man and his nets more easily than can gulls and skuas. On the outward journey, when there was little fishing activity, most birds (mainly immature Lesser Black-backed Gulls *L. fuscus*) were resting on the sea in dense rafts; on the return passage, the fleets were farther south, and so were the birds. Two vessels in particular were either drawing in nets or gutting, and the numbers of birds around each (apart from gulls, which were not counted) are shown in table 2. (The Great Skuas *S. skua* at vessel A included many arriving from farther north, obviously attracted by the movement of other skuas.)

Table 2. Numbers of birds other than gulls *Larus* counted at two fishing vessels, Bay of Biscay, 13th October 1974

Species	Vessel A	Vessel B
Gannet <i>Sula bassana</i>	50	10
Great Shearwater <i>Puffinus gravis</i>	20	—
Kittiwake <i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	—	25
Great Skua <i>Stercorarius skua</i>	75	15

No doubt gulls have made use of man's fishing activities in this way for many years, possibly for the past century or more. Perhaps the interesting feature that could be pursued further is the development of this habit among other species. Have Great Skuas, Gannets and Great Shearwaters *P. gravis*, for example, exploited this food source only in more recent years (in the cases of the first two, perhaps since they themselves have become more numerous in the western Atlantic), or has the habit merely gone unrecorded as have so many other commonplace events? P. J. OLIVER

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Spoonbills breeding during winter in Spain *BWP* gives the normal egg-laying period of the Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia* for most European colonies as late April. Our observations at Doñana, southwest Spain, show that Spoonbills begin laying in mid March, but the peak is reached in early April (see also *Ardeola* 6: 378-379). Small numbers of Spoonbills have wintered in southwest Spain (*Sterna* 12: 225-268; L. García and J. A. Amat, unpublished), but no proof of early breeding has been recorded until now. During aerial surveys of waterfowl on 16th March 1979, we saw at least ten Spoonbills' nests with chicks (and others with eggs) in a mixed colony with Grey Herons *Ardea cinerea* at the Marismas of Huelva; this colony, on an area of glassworts *Arthrocnemum*, has been occupied by Spoonbills since 1977. Because of the census method, it was difficult to age the chicks, but the oldest were standing up in the nests, suggesting that they were at least two weeks old. From incubation figures given in *BWP*, and assuming that

the chicks were two weeks old, we estimate the first laying as late January or early February. Our thanks are due to the Spanish Airforce for supplying the aeroplane. LUIS GARCIA, JUAN A. AMAT and MANUEL RODRIGUEZ
Estación Biológica de Doñana, Sevilla-12, Spain

Foot-paddling by Ring-necked Duck On 17th October 1979, at the Great Pool, Tresco, Scilly, B. L. Short, I and others watched a female Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* persistently foot-paddling in the shallow, muddy waters, rising 'on its haunches' as it did so and then promptly diving. As the dives were protracted, and the duck usually surfaced close by, its search for food was evidently concentrated on the area it had stirred up. *BWP* quotes Dr K. E. L. Simmons (*Brit. Birds* 61: 308-309) in stating that the Pochard *A. ferina*, 'unlike other *Aythya*, so far as known, at times foot paddles before diving, apparently to stir up food'. As Ring-necked Ducks prefer the shallow fringes of lakes, it seems likely that the behaviour by this species has previously gone unrecorded.

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R. A. Palmer (1975, *Handbook of North American Birds*, vol. 2) mentioned Ring-necked Ducks 'wallowing in mud to stir up snails, etc.', which may be similar to foot-paddling or serve the same purpose. EDS

Hen Harriers 'playing' at roost In the winter of 1978/79, up to 11 Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus* roosted in a reed-bed beside a meadow on my farm at Sidlesham, West Sussex, including one adult male, up to six females and up to four juvenile males; numbers varied between seven and 11 nightly, and there was almost certainly a secondary roost somewhere on the nearby Selsey peninsula. On 28th January, a fine but windy evening, I watched several 'ringtails' (females/immatures) 'playing' on the meadow, very like kittens: pouncing on pieces of stick, dead grass or other detritus, going through the motions of killing, picking up the pieces in flight, then dropping them and repeating the process. Several times, harriers flew over a piece, suddenly twisting and diving in at it as though attacking prey. One attacked a sizeable tussock, which it repeatedly grabbed and tried to lift; finally, it landed, rolled on to its side and continually slashed at the tussock with its talons. The entire performance lasted about 20 minutes, before the harriers retired to roost. As far as I could make out, only immature males (identified by size and build) were involved. I watched this roost regularly throughout January and February, but saw this behaviour only once, although harriers were always present half an hour before actually roosting.

M. SHRUBB
Fairfields, Sidlesham, Chichester, West Sussex

Donald Watson has commented as follows: 'I have not seen Hen Harriers at a roost playing with inanimate objects, nor has R. C. Dickson, who also often watches roosts; RCD has, however, twice seen one near a roost, by day, lifting and dropping cow dung. We both agree that, at our roosts, it would be difficult to see the raptors tearing at tussocks on the ground because of the very long vegetation. It is interesting that Mr Shrubbs thought the harriers were juveniles, as rather similar behaviour is common among that age-group in the post-fledging period: I have seen them make little drops, or perhaps 'stoops', to the ground and pounce with talons into the grass, as if practising hunting in the absence of real prey'. In addition, Keith L.

Bildstein (*Wilson Bull.* 92: 128-130), writing on similar behaviour by the North American race of the Hen Harrier, also likened it to kittens playing; he, too, found that juveniles appeared to indulge in the practice more than adults, and further suggested that harriers purposefully select objects the size of their natural prey and that the behaviour 'may function in acquisition as well as in maintenance of prey catching skills'. Eds

Collared Dove 'caressing' nictitating membrane of mate At 16.00 GMT on 27th January 1980, in my garden where I then lived at Brentry, Bristol, I saw two Collared Doves *Streptopelia decaocto* 'caressing' each other while perched on a branch about 4m above the ground; one, presumably the male, called intermittently. After a few minutes, the female began to nibble at the left eye of its mate, the nictitating membrane of which being moved over the eye beforehand. The male made no attempt to withdraw his head, and the behaviour was repeated three or four times, each time for ten to 15 seconds and following preliminary mandibulation of the neck or crown. With binoculars, I saw that the male's left eye showed no sign of injury or disease, either when exposed or when covered by its membrane.

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Polygyny by Blue Tits Von Haartman (1969) mentioned that evidence for bigamy has been provided for 64% of mid-European passerines that build roofed nests or breed in holes, and included the Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus* on the authority of Nethersole-Thompson (1951). This latter author, however, gave no additional information. In our work on tits at Ghent and Antwerp, Belgium, we also study Blue Tit populations in detail and try to trap all breeding adults when they enter the nestboxes to feed their young. We were very surprised to trap the same male in two different, but neighbouring, boxes; although we thought initially that we had misread the ring number, or that the tit had entered the wrong box, we now have seven such cases over the three breeding seasons 1978-80. More detailed observations in some cases support our interpretation of bigamy. In three of these, both females bred in the same male's territory. In particular, in one of the two instances in Peerdsbos B in 1980, where JS made detailed observations on territorial behaviour and most Blue Tits were colour-ringed, the same male was behaving territorially (song or scolding) accompanied by two females: during 24th March-16th April, he was observed three times with female 1, and both he and female 1 were observed once each alone in the part of the territory in which female 1 was to lay; after she had started laying on 17th April, the male was observed during 21st-23rd April scolding and singing, with and without female 2, around the nestbox in which female 2 started her clutch on 22nd April. Both females were identified by their colour rings while incubating, and trapped when feeding their nestlings; the male was trapped feeding young in both nestboxes; although detailed observations were made on territorial behaviour throughout March and April, no other male was seen around the nestboxes or in the territory. In the second case in Peerdsbos B in 1980, male and female 1 were known to be paired, since they were observed together in March.

Table 1 summarises the information available for the polygynous broods. Of seven bigamous males, two were yearlings and five older. In the years and areas where bigamy was observed, a total of 141 males was trapped, of which 83 (58.9%) were yearlings. Although the data suggest that older males would more frequently be bigamous, the differences are statistically not significant ($\chi^2=1.63$, $P>0.10$). Among 'first' females (those laying earlier in the triangle), there is only one yearling; among 'second' females, four are yearlings. With our small sample, this result could well be due to chance ($P=0.13$, one-tailed Fisher exact probability test). In neither sex, therefore, can we show that bigamy occurs more frequently in particular age classes. The interval in laying between the two females in a triangle varied between two and 27 days (median four days), so that, in most cases, the females were laying only a few days apart. In the case with the longest interval, the second female did not start to lay until the first had small nestlings.

Table 1. Breeding details of seven cases of polygyny in Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus*, Ghent and Antwerp, Belgium, 1978-80

For Calixberg 1980, the clutch size in brackets refers to the number of eggs after a swap experiment

Area and year	AGE (YEARS)		First egg date	Estimated fledging date	Clutch size	No. yng fledging	Mean wt (g)	
	Male	Female					Average wt (g) of yng at 15 days	all first broods in area at 15 days
Gontrode 1978	2	2	21 Apr	4 Jun	11	11	—	—
		2	25 Apr	10 Jun	10	4	—	
Gontrode 1979	1	2	17 Apr	4 Jun	16	13	11.0	11.09
		1	27 Apr	11 Jun	11	10	10.1	
Calixberg 1979	2+	2+	18 Apr	4 Jun	11	11	10.8	10.48
		1	21 Apr	7 Jun	9	8	10.0	
Peerdsbos T 1979	1	1	22 Apr	4 Jun	9	8	11.0	11.16
		2+	24 Apr	10 Jun	12	11	10.4	
Calixberg 1980	3+	2	7 Apr	21 May	10 (9)	4	10.3	10.87
		1	27 Apr	5 Jun	9 (8)	6	11.1	
Peerdsbos B 1980	3+	3+	17 Apr	2 Jun	12	11	11.5	11.18
		3+	22 Apr	10 Jun	14	10	11.1	
Peerdsbos B 1980	2	2	17 Apr	2 Jun	11	7	11.7	11.18
		1	13 May	21 Jun	9	9	11.2	

Male Blue Tits contribute substantially to the rearing of the young (Hinde 1952). Since we trapped the same male in both nests, we know that he contributed to the feeding of the young in both, although we have no observations on the frequency of visits to each one. Our data show that both females can raise their young successfully. In six of the cases, the first female was more successful than the second (higher proportion of young fledged, or greater mean weight of nestlings at 15 days); young in first nests had weights similar to or greater than the average for all first broods. That the second female can be quite successful was demonstrated particularly in 1980, when weights of their young compared favourably with the mean for the whole area. In several other, monogamous, first broods where no male

was observed feeding young, nestling mortality was high, and young appeared very hungry and were markedly underweight at 15 days: suggesting that the bigamous male's help at both nests is substantial.

If bigamy in the Blue Tit is as relatively common as we seem to find ($\pm 4\%$ of pairs in areas and years when observed), one wonders why it has not been documented before. Either it occurred, but was not discovered, or it did not occur in other populations; both explanations are possible. We normally trap males when they enter a nestbox to feed young. Once trapped, they are more difficult to trap again: so, unless a special effort is made to trap all males, the bigamous ones will be missed first. Since 1959, we have studied tits in nine different study areas at Ghent; only three times have we trapped all males in a particular area in a breeding season. If bigamy occurred, it might easily have escaped us. On the other hand, even in the areas and years in which we did observe bigamous males, we did not manage to trap all the males. Perhaps conditions in the populations and years in which polygyny was observed were different. In our studies on competition between Great *P. major* and Blue Tits we have manipulated the nestboxes, in particular to increase Blue Tit breeding densities (cf. Dhondt & Eyckerman 1980): at Ghent, we have thereby obtained much higher Blue Tit densities in Gontrode since 1977; and, at Antwerp, high Blue Tit densities in Calixberg and in Peerdsbos B; while densities in two other areas were normal. Six of the seven cases of bigamy were found in the areas in which Blue Tit breeding densities had reached high levels (about two pairs per ha). A tentative hypothesis can then be put forward: in areas with 'normal' Blue Tit breeding densities (about one pair per ha), all males that survive winter can obtain a territory and breed. In such areas, Blue Tit territories do not cover the entire habitat (Granitzer 1978; De Laet *in litt.*). On the other hand, at high breeding densities, Blue Tit territories are contiguous and fill the entire area (Schillemans 1979; personal observations). If, in this latter situation, some males are excluded, and if the sex-ratio is balanced, there would be a surplus of females which then have the choice of not breeding or of pairing with an already-mated male; those that choose the second strategy seem to do so successfully, and would, therefore, not be selected against.

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Announcements

XIX Congressus Internationalis Ornithologicus FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT

At the XVIII International Ornithological Congress in Moscow the International Ornithological Committee accepted the invitation of the National Museum of Natural Sciences of Canada and of the Canadian ornithological community to hold the XIX Congress in Canada. The Congress will be held in Ottawa, Canada, during 22nd-29th June 1986. Dr Prof. Klaus Immelmann (West Germany) was elected as President of the Congress, and Dr Henri Ouellet (Canada) was designated as Secretary-General.

Details about the general and scientific programmes, field excursions, and other activities during the Congress will be available later.

Those interested in participating in the Congress are urged to inform the Secretariat in order to obtain announcements and application forms. Correspondence should be addressed to The Secretary-General, Dr Henri Ouellet, XIX Congressus Internationalis Ornithologicus, National Museum of Natural Sciences, National Museums of Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1A 0M8.

'Birds New to Britain and Ireland' The pre-publication offer to *BB* subscribers of this book for £11.50 instead of £12.60 has been extended from 31st December 1982 and will now close on 20th January 1983. This book will *not* be available through British BirdShop after this date. Please order your copy at once (see page ix).

'Notebook' and 'Seventies' Macmillan London Ltd, the publishers of *A Notebook of Birds 1907-1980* by Jim Flegg (1981) and *Birdwatching in the Seventies* by D. I. M. Wallace (1981), have offered *BB* subscribers the chance to obtain these two books, based on *BB* material, at half price (the two for £7.45 instead of £14.90). Please order through British BirdShop on page ix in the centre of this issue.

'A Field Guide to the Bird Songs of Britain and Europe' This set of 16 cassettes (or 15 LP discs) has proved to be so popular that we are continuing to offer it not only post free but also at a greatly reduced price to *BB* subscribers:

- | | | |
|--------------|------------|-------------------------|
| 16 cassettes | £10.00 off | (£80 instead of £90) |
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If you have not yet obtained yours, please order now through 'British BirdShop' on page ix in the centre of this issue.



We are pleased to announce that this annual competition will again be sponsored by Matthew Gloag & Son Ltd, proprietors of 'The Famous Grouse' Scotch whisky. *British Birds* will be running the competition, and the rules will be the same as in previous years:

Up to three colour transparencies, each taken during 1982, may be submitted by each photographer. They will be judged not only on technical excellence, but also on originality and scientific interest, and aesthetic appeal and artistic composition. Preference will be given to photographs taken in Britain and Ireland, but those of species on the British and Irish list taken elsewhere are also eligible. A brief account (not more than 200 words) should be enclosed with each, giving the circumstances in which obtained, the method used, technical details (focal length of lens and make of camera and film), locality, date and photographer's name and address. Transparencies will be returned only if accompanied by a suitable SAE.

The judging panel will consist of Dr R. J. Chandler, Eric Hosking, Dr J. T. R. Sharrock and Don Smith.

Past winners of this competition have been Michael C. Wilkes (1976), Peter Lowes (1977), Dr Edmund C. Fellowes (1978), Don Smith (1979), Richard T. Mills (1980) and Dennis Coutts (1981). Their prizes were presented at London Press Receptions by Sir Peter Scott, Mrs Joyce Grenfell, Bill Oddie, Jeffery Boswall and Humphrey Lyttelton. The 1982 award (cheque for £100 and engraved Red Grouse trophy) will be presented to the winning photographer by a well-known personality at a similar ceremony in London. The runners-up will be welcome to attend the award presentation.

The closing date for entries is 31st January 1983. Transparencies should be clearly marked 'Bird Photograph of the Year' and sent to the editorial office at Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

Best recent black-and-white bird-photographs The closing date for submission of prints for the twenty-fourth annual selection is 31st January 1983. Photographers may submit as many black-and-white prints as they wish. The following details should be written on the back of each print: photographer's name and address, species, county (or country, if taken abroad), month, year, and technical details, such as make and size of camera, make and focal length of lens, type of film material, exposure and approximate distance from the subject. Prints will be retained in the editorial office as part of the reference collection and for possible future use in the journal unless a request for return is noted on the back of each print and a suitable stamped and addressed envelope is supplied. Entries should be addressed to 'Best recent work', Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

Bird Illustrator of the Year Amateur and professional artists are invited to submit four line-drawings suitable for reproduction in *British Birds* (pen-and-ink or scraperboard, but not pencil or wash). The subjects should be birds recorded in the west Palearctic (Europe, North Africa and the Middle East). Exact size is important: drawings will be published at the following sizes: (width \times depth in cm) 12.2 \times 13.7, 10.9 \times 4.6 and 5.3 \times 4.0, but those submitted should be 'half-up' (1½ times) or double these dimensions. Each set of four drawings should include at least one of each of the three sizes. Entries will be judged as sets. The announcements of the previous winners (*Brit. Birds* 72: 403-409; 73: 380-384; 74: 275-278; 75: 304-308) included suggestions intended to help future entrants.

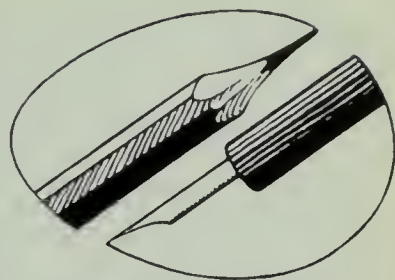
The judging panel will consist of Robert Gillmor, Alan Harris and Dr J. T. R. Sharrock.

The winner will receive £75 and an inscribed salver, and the two runners-up will receive £40 and £25. All three artists will also be invited to attend the award presentation at a Press Reception at the Mall Galleries in London, where a selection of the drawings will be on display. Artists whose work is displayed will also be welcome to attend the reception, which in previous years has provided a very happy occasion for meeting many of our top bird artists. Previous winners have been Crispin Fisher (1979), Norman Arlott (1980 and 1981) and Alan Harris (1982).

The winners' entries will be displayed in the annual exhibition of the Society of Wildlife Artists at The Mall Gallery. Entries will remain the copyright of the artists, but are accepted on the understanding that they may be reproduced free in, on the cover of, or for the promotion of *British Birds*. If accompanied by a suitable stamped and addressed envelope, all drawings will be returned to the artists, but any selected for possible use by *British Birds* may be retained for up to 12 months after the award presentation.

Each drawing must be marked clearly on the back with the artist's name and address (and date of birth if aged under 21, see 'The Richard Richardson Award', below), the identity of the species and any other relevant information about the illustration. The closing date will be 14th March 1983; the set of four drawings should be sent to 'Bird Illustrator of the Year', Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

The Richard Richardson Award To encourage young, up-and-coming bird artists, a special award (a cheque and a book to the total value of £50) will be presented for the best work submitted for the 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' competition (see above) by an artist aged under 21 years on 14th March 1983. The winner's entries will be displayed in the annual exhibition of the Society of Wildlife Artists at the Mall Gallery. This award is in memory of the famous Norfolk ornithologist and bird-artist, the late R. A. Richardson. The rules for entry are exactly the same as for 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' and entries by persons under 21 will automatically be considered for both awards.



Front cover designs for sale The original unframed drawings of the pictures on the front cover of *BB* are for sale each month in a postal auction. The pictures are usually 1½ or two times the published size. These sales help not only the artists, but also *BB*, since the artists donate 20% to the journal. It is also a way for *BB* readers to acquire—for themselves or as a present for a friend—top-class bird art at very reasonable prices. During the past year, successful postal bids have ranged from £10 to £100; the average has been £35. Why not send in your bid each month? Send your name, address and telephone number and your bid (no money at this stage), to arrive before the last day of the month, to Cover Bid, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

Requests

Hirundine roosts Several regular hirundine roosts appear to have held unusually low numbers of Swallows *Hirundo rustica* in the autumn of 1982. We would be very interested to receive any details of estimated numbers of Swallows and of Sand Martins *Riparia riparia* (separately) at roosts in 1982, together with any comparable counts from recent years. In order to obtain an accurate picture of the use of roosts we would like counts *from all roosts, whether numbers have changed or not*. Please send any counts/estimates to Rob Fuller or Dr Peter Lack at: BTO, Beech Grove, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 5NR.

Photographs for 'A New Dictionary of Birds' The new edition of this standard work will include black-and-white photographs of as great a variety as possible of aspects of bird behaviour. Photographs (or colour transparencies for conversion) will be greatly welcomed; profits from the book go to the BOU, so photographers are asked to allow use of their photographs for no fee. Straightforward portraits (however good) are *not* required; the photographs are needed to illustrate aspects of behaviour such as anting, bower-building, courtship display, displacement activity, egg camouflage, feather-drying, and greeting (to take just seven of dozens of examples). Please send prints or transparencies (with full captions) to Eric Hosking, 20 Crouch Hall Road, London N8 8HX.

Please use 'British BirdShop' Subscribers' support of our special book offers and the Peterson Sound Guide offer has significantly increased the journal's income and enabled us to have extra pages of papers and notes. We hope that we have also provided a useful service to our readers.

These offers will continue; indeed, we intend to increase the number and variety of items available through *British Birds*. New items will be announced within the main text, and all current offers will be listed monthly on an order form (see page ix in this issue).

Please support *BB* by using this service whenever we offer an item that you want. By doing so, you will be helping us to provide a bigger *British Birds* each month.

News and comment

Robin Prytherch and Mike Everett

Regular subscribers will notice a change in authorship of this feature. Bob Spencer will soon be retiring from his post as Director of Services in the

BTO and moving to Cumbria, and has decided to withdraw from co-authorship of 'News and comment' after one full year. We shall miss Bob's sound judgment and critical—but always fair—comments, as well as 'the BTO connection', but quite understand his desire to devote as much as possible of his retirement to birding.

In Bob Spencer's place, Robin Prytherch has now joined Mike Everett as co-author of 'News and comment'. His name will be thoroughly familiar to many readers, especially those in southwestern Britain and everyone who watches BBC natural history programmes, for Robin is a long-standing member of the BBC Natural History Unit which is based in Bristol. He is closely associated with the Bristol Ornithological Club and a member of the editorial committee of *Bristol Ornithology* (the club journal that is almost a southwestern version of *BB*, with frequent papers by Dr K. E. L. Simmons and notes by Bernard King). We welcome Robin to the *BB* team and look forward to the new slant that his West Country and BBC connections will bring to our news column. EDS.

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

Moscow IOC The XVIII International Ornithological Congress was held in Moscow in August 1982. IOCs occur every four years, the previous one being in Berlin. Our colleagues in the USSR are to be congratulated on organising this major event for 900 or so participants, including 30 from the United Kingdom. With about half those attending from Eastern Bloc countries, it was an exceptional opportunity to meet their ornithologists and learn about their research, which ranged from waterfowl in the Estonian SSR, bird communities in the primeval Białowieża Forest of eastern Poland, feeding niches of Collared Flycatchers *Ficedula albicollis* and *Acrocephalus* warblers in Hungary, and vast tern and gull colonies on the Black and Caspian Seas, to waders and threatened cranes in eastern Siberia and Asia. In addition to about 250 papers presented in three or four concurrent sessions, 40 films were shown. Most of these were Russian and included breeding-ground sequences of such little-known species as Siberian Spruce Grouse *Dendragapus falcipennis*, Little Whimbrel *Numenius minutus*, that aberrant wader the Ibisbill *Ibidorhynchos struthersii*, and Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea*, as well as the Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis*, the Congress emblem.

Poster presentations were a particularly successful feature and, from them, it was possible to glean some useful population data: 17,350 Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* nests in Italy (1981); 18,000 Red-breasted Geese in the Taimyr (1979); 70-80 pairs of White-

tailed Eagles *Haliaeetus albicilla* in Poland and 90 pairs in the German Democratic Republic (1980/81); 10,000-50,000 Demoiselle Cranes *Anthropoides virgo* in the USSR (1981); 20,000-25,000 Great Bustards *Otis tarda* in the world (1970s); 37,200 pairs of Slender-billed Gulls *Larus genei* and 30,800 pairs of Sandwich Terns *Sterna sandvicensis* on one Black Sea island (1981), and another colony of 24,000 pairs of Sandwich Terns on a Caspian island; 682 pairs of Little Terns *Sterna albigrons* on the Po delta, Italy, and a further 405 pairs on the river inland (1981); and at least 1,660 (possibly 4,000) pairs of Aleutian Terns *Sterna aleutica* in Sakhalin and Kamchatka, USSR.

To mark the Congress, there was a special issue of bird stamps, depicting the black-billed eastern race of White Stork *Ciconia ciconia boyciana*, Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus*, Steller's Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus pelagicus*, Hooded Crane *Grus monacha*, Sociable Plover *Vanellus gregarius* and Spoon-billed Sandpiper *Eurynorhynchus pygmaeus*. A particularly notable achievement was the publication in time for the Congress of the first three discs of a series of sound recordings of Russian birds by Professor Boris Neprintzev. These cover the divers, including White-billed *Gavia adamsii*, and 59 species of waders, several of which are recorded for the first time.

It was disappointing that no local bird-watching excursion had been arranged during the Conference, but several large wooded parks and the banks of the Moskva River (with Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*, Honey Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus*, Corncrake *Crex crex*,

White-backed Woodpecker *Dendrocopos leucotos*, Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia*, Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* and Scarlet Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*) and a splendid sewage-farm (several Marsh *Tringa stagnatilis* as well as many Wood Sandpipers *T. glareola*) within the City offered some compensation for British delegates. Indeed, one had to go no farther than the Kremlin for Hobby *Falco subbuteo* and Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*. The next IOC will be in Ottawa in 1986. (Contributed by James Cadbury)

The Hooded Grebe It is strange that no fewer than three species of grebes remained undescribed well into the present century: the Atitlán (or Giant Pied-billed) Grebe *Podilymbus gigas* of Guatemala until 1929, the Aloatra (or Delacour's Little) Grebe *Tachybaptus rufolavatus* of Madagascar until 1932, and, most remarkable of all, the Hooded Grebe *Podiceps gallardoi* of Argentina until 1974. Medium-large in size, with strikingly distinctive black-and-white breeding plumage (crowned by a frontal fan of chestnut, white, and black on the head), this last species was discovered quite by accident when, on 27th April 1974, M. A. E. Rumboll visited the chilly, wind-swept Laguna de Los Escarchados on the bleak, lake-studded plateau south of the Santa Cruz Valley in southern Patagonia and collected a grebe in order to demonstrate to his companion how to prepare a study skin; only after they had got back to their museum headquarters in Buenos Aires was it realised that the bird was unknown to science! The excitement that this totally unexpected discovery caused among grebe-men can easily be imagined, and a number of them have since visited the lake and its area to study the new grebe. The initial investigations form the subject of two papers in the latest issue of *The Living Bird* (19: 51-67, 68-71), published in August 1982, the first by R. W. Storer (who was at Los Escarchados in December 1975 and January 1976) and the second by G. L. Neuchterlein and A. Johnson (who were at another lake, Blanquillo, from December 1980 to February 1981). Both Storer and Neuchterlein paid a further visit to the area in 1981-82, when J. Fjeldså was also in the field, so further reports can be expected. Meanwhile, the grebe had been studied and photographed also by the Argentinian naturalist F. Erize (see W. Conway, *Animal Kingdom* 83: 17-19).

That such a tame and conspicuous grebe

should have remained undiscovered for so long appears to be due to a combination of factors. The breeding area is remote and inhospitable and, though far from isolated (the town of Calafate is only 70km from Los Escarchados), seems seldom to have been visited by Argentinian ornithologists in the past, and the number of lakes in the region is legend. The Hooded Grebe is only a summer resident there and the wintering area is not known. Though it will disperse in some years onto other lakes, its sole breeding station in most years seems to be Los Escarchados, where numbers are now so low (perhaps less than 100 individuals) and breeding success so poor (due in part to predation by Kelp Gulls and predation and competition from Red-gartered Coots) that the species must be considered endangered and a cause for international concern. As an important first step, Los Escarchados itself has now been set up as a reserve with its own warden and observatory. (Contributed by Dr K. E. L. Simmons)

Chew Valley Lake After many years of negotiations, the diggers have at last been sent in to carry out habitat changes at Chew Valley Lake, Avon. Soon after the southern part of the lake was declared a private nature reserve (by Bristol Waterworks Company), local birdwatchers and naturalists presented plans to improve the habitat, mainly for breeding birds. A few minor works have been carried out over the years, but recently a substantial island and a large shallow lagoon have been created. Other changes are planned, although the implementation of these will depend on local birdwatchers who are expected to contribute to the cost of the work. Future plans include the construction of another hide, but its siting is unresolved: several favourite spots are, we understand, being hotly contested!

'Hoopoe Day' This was the title of an entertaining short play on Radio 3 last October (Tuesday 5th, at 7 p.m.). It concerned an elderly home-bound birdwatcher who was convinced that he would see a Hoopoe *Upupa epops* on his eighty-fifth birthday. The ornithological content was very convincing and based on the knowledge of the author, Harry Barton, who lives and birdwatches in Northern Ireland, where the play is set. But although the ageing hero was looking forward to his birthday with keen anticipation he was also concerned about reaching 'the

third stage of the birdwatcher'. To fill you in, the first stage is reached when you claim a sighting only if you are 100% sure of it (what we all aim for); at the second stage, you give yourself the benefit of the doubt (the top of the slippery slope); and the third stage is 'mad certitude' or sheer fantasy! Harry Barton has obviously been looking at bird-watchers too . . .

Scilly: news from the Porthcressa A competition among this autumn's birders to invent new collective terms for birds (or birders) produced a good response, of which the following are some of those suitable for publication:

- A QUESTION of Willet
- A BEVY of Nightjars
- AN ANGER of Crossbills
- A FIELD-FIELD of bulbuls
- A LEGITIMACY of bustards
- A BLIZZARD of Snow Buntings
- A DITHIR of Dunnocks
- A GRANT of Baldpates
- A BLAND of thick-knees
- A PLAGUE of twitchers
- A CONFUSION of dudes
- A DISMAY of dippers
- A ZIP of flycatchers
- A KELLOGG of Corncrakes, and
- A WELLY of Booted Eagles

The more serious competitions were won as follows: 'Birdbrain of 1982' 1st Keith Vinicombe (28 points), 2nd Chris Harbard (24 points) and 3rd Steve Gantlett (23 points). The winner of the photographic quiz (the only competitor to get all six correct) was J. Calladine. (Contributed by David Hunt)

Alan Kitson Alan Kitson, well known to *BB* readers for his numerous contributions, including observations from Mongolia, is currently recuperating from a very serious motorcycle accident in his home county of Sussex on 1st October. Get well soon, Alan!

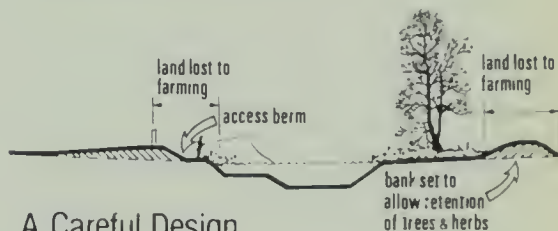
Bedfordshire rivers Following on its booklet *Bedfordshire—landscape and wildlife* (1980), the County Council has now produced another booklet, the first of eight 'sector studies', on *Bedfordshire River Valleys* (1982). Clearly set out, nicely designed, well illustrated and full of *constructive* ideas, this 40-page booklet deserves to be seen widely outside the county as well as thoroughly perused by anyone involved in land-use or conservation within Bedfordshire. The go-ahead

County Planning Department deserves congratulations. If the many proposals and suggestions for co-operation between differing interests are acted upon, Bedfordshire is destined to become a pleasanter county for its inhabitants, both wild and human. The inclusion of the Water Space Amenity Commission's guidelines for minimal river destruction during water course alterations (repeated here) may have come rather too late to save much of the Ouse and the Ivel, but does epitomise the booklet's constructive approach.

Copies may be obtained (£1.00 + 20½p postage) from the County Planning Department, County Hall, Bedford MK42 9AP (Contributed by JTRS)



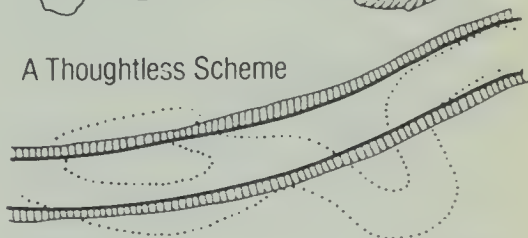
The Routine Approach



A Careful Design



A Thoughtless Scheme



A Balanced Design

(Adapted from the W.S.A.C. Guidelines, pages 18 & 30)

Wildlife film awards *Wildscreen 82* was the first World Wildlife Film and Television Festival to be held in Britain (at Bristol, during October 1982). Awards were presented in ten categories to films selected from an original entry of 128 from 33 countries. *Osprey* won the 'Best Wildlife Script' award, which must have pleased the RSPB and Hugh Miles, who photographed and produced the film. But far more important for Hugh was the winning of the 'Best Wildlife Camera-man' award. Apart from the spectacular sequences of Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus*, Hugh was also behind the camera for those memorable films on the Ostrich *Struthio camelus* (*The Impossible Bird*) and the White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* (*Return of the Sea Eagle*). He also contributed in a major way to *The Flight of the Condor*, and many more films. Much of his success comes from prolonged and careful observation which results in an uncanny ability to anticipate the actions of his 'quarry'. Congratulations, Hugh!

North Sea birds The third *North Sea Bird Watch Annual Report*, for 1981, has recently been published. It lists the details of 84 species seen by ten observers from six installations managed by Phillips Petroleum in the North Sea. It is likely to be the last produced individually by Phillips as in future all records will be incorporated with those from other installations, in the annual report of the North Sea Bird Club. This must be a good move. Inevitably, the present report is rather slim, with only one or two records for many species. Otherwise phrases like 'reported from', 'occasional birds', 'recorded regularly', and so on are the only clues you get concerning most of the more numerous species, which is a shame. Even so, for those interested in migration or seabird distribution, this report will be worth getting. It can be obtained from Dr R. A. F. Cox, Co-ordinator, North Sea Bird Watch, Phillips Petroleum Company Europe-Africa, Portland House, Stag Place, London SW1E 5DA.



Recent reports

R. A. Hume and
K. Allsopp

These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records

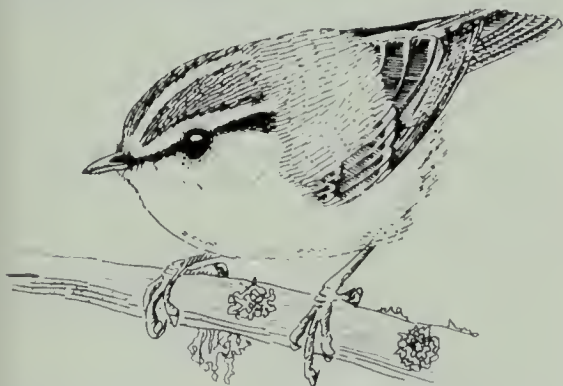
All dates refer to October unless stated otherwise.

The month was dominated by unsettled cyclonic weather with frequent fronts, but

with generally mild conditions. During the first fortnight, a cyclone which arrived from the west was blocked by high pressure on the Continent and became stationary over the

North Sea. The associated weather fronts also became slow-moving, and orientated west to east from the east coast across Europe to Russia, with an easterly flow along their northern side. During 15th, high pressure which had also appeared in mid Atlantic during the early period declined, and fast-moving depressions arrived from the west, with westerlies in the south and south-easterlies in the north. After 22nd, the weather became more anticyclonic as pressure rose from the southwest giving some clear, sunny days.

Siberian invaders

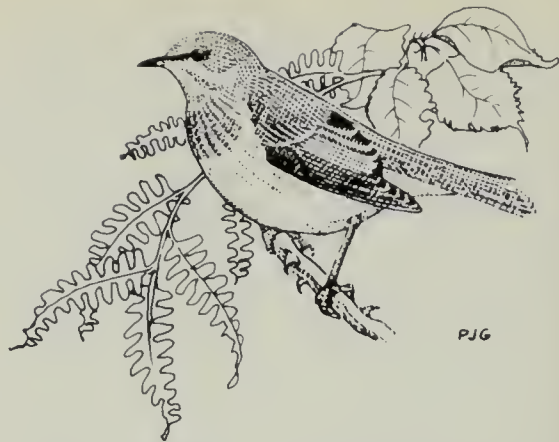


The year continued to break all sorts of records and October was quite staggering in many respects. **Pallas's Warblers** *Phylloscopus proregulus* led the way, with three times more than in any previous year and far more than would ever have been imagined even a decade ago. The earliest was on Fair Isle (Shetland) on 6th, followed there by singles on 8th and 10th, a fantastic total of ten on 11th, with two remaining on 12th. This pattern was followed elsewhere in the north and east: more in Shetland on 12th, (totalling at least 12), six in Orkney from 11th to 15th, one at Aberdeen (Grampian) and two in Fife on 11th and 12th, one at Pease Bay (Lothian) and four at St Abbs Head (Borders) on 12th, at least 13 on the coast from Holy Island (Northumberland) to Hartlepool (Cleveland) from 9th to 12th, and one at Scarborough (North Yorkshire) on 11th. Two reached the west coast on 13th, at Walney Island: the first record for Cumbria. Several arrived at Flamborough Head (North Humberside) and four at Spurn Point (North Humberside) from 9th, one at Saltfleetby (Lincolnshire) on 10th-11th, and arrivals on the north Norfolk coast were between 8th and 10th, with perhaps a second wave later: these were at Holme, Wells (where there were six or eight), Stiffkey, Weybourne and Waxham. On the south coast, they were mostly dis-

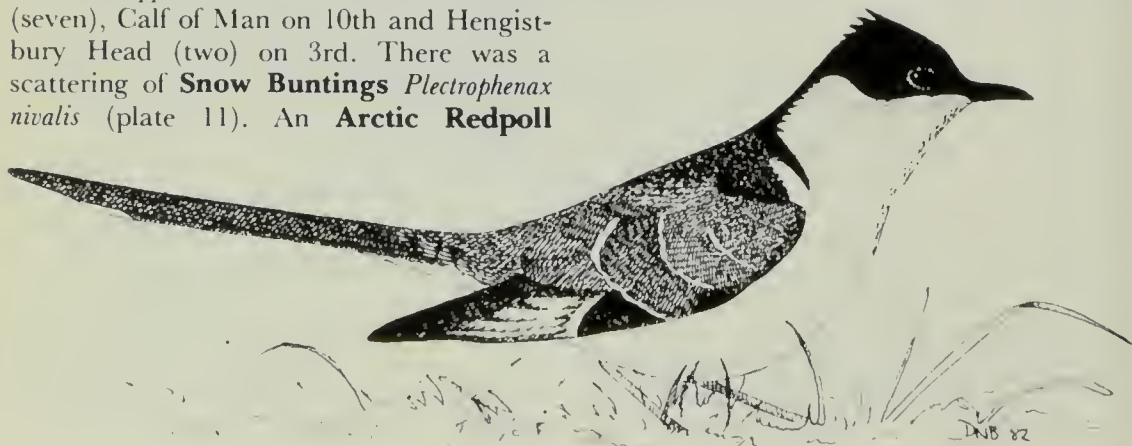
covered in a later spell, from 23rd to 30th, except on Scilly where they arrived from 15th, at Deal and St Margaret's (Kent) on 13th and at Prawle Point (Devon) where there was one on 14th and three on 30th. Dungeness (Kent) had two, Scilly up to five and Hengistbury Head (Dorset), Portland Bill (Dorset), and Porthgwarra and St Leven (Cornwall) all had singles. The final total will probably be over 90 and may exceed 100, and every one a gem. **Yellow-browed Warblers** *P. inornatus*, on the other hand, were oddly scarce, with, for example, only two on Fair Isle (on 2nd) and few in Scilly. Most arrived between 6th and 12th, including three on Holy Island and five at Spurn. Of the total of 25 to 30, singles reached as far west as Lundy Island (Devon)—early, on 5th—Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork) and Kinsale (Co. Cork) at the end of the month. **Radde's Warblers** *P. schwarzi* also come from a very long way east: 14 arrived between 8th and 30th, at St Agnes and St Mary's (Scilly), Hook Head (Wexford)—the first in Ireland—Wells (two), Holy Island, Whitburn (Tyne & Wear), Spurn, Flamborough (three) (plate 9), Shetland and Orkney (two). There were only 30 previous records! **Dusky Warblers** *P. fuscatus*, previously level-pegging, fell behind, but still produced six, between 9th and 11th, at St Abbs, Seaham (Tyne & Wear), Hartlepool and Sheringham (Norfolk), and on 23rd at St Agnes and 30th on Bardsey (Gwynedd).

Greenish Warblers *P. trochiloides* were quite separate, with singles at Low Hauxley (Northumberland) on 6th and 17th September, at Holme on 10th September, at Sumburgh (Shetland) from 24th to 30th September, at Scarborough on 16th and at St Margaret's Bay and Deal on 27th. An **Arctic Warbler** *P. borealis* caused excitement on Lundy on 5th. **Goldcrests** *Regulus regulus* were heavily involved in the east coast arrivals from 9th to 12th, with 1,000 at St Abbs, 200 on Fair Isle on 11th, several thousands on Holy Island, 15,000 on the Isle of May, thousands elsewhere in Fife and hundreds in Tyne & Wear localities. They were also very conspicuous even inland as far as Bedfordshire. **Blackcaps** *Sylvia atricapilla* also peaked at 150 on Fair Isle on 11th and there were hundreds, with hundreds of **Robins** *Erithacus rubecula* too, in Fife that day. A **Lesser Whitethroat** *S. curruca* resembling the Siberian race *blythi* reached St Abbs, and **Stonechats** *Saxicola*

torquata of Siberian origin reached Fair Isle on 6th and 10th and Flamborough on 17th (plate 10). **Booted Warblers** *Hippolais caligata* were reported from Tresco (Scilly) on 6th and Scarborough from 11th to 16th. More eastern vagrants included another **Lanceolated Warbler** *Locustella lanceolata* on Fair Isle on 6th and **Black-throated Thrushes** *Turdus ruficollis* on St Mary's from 7th to 14th and on Fair Isle on 13th. A **Rufous Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia orientalis* was reported from St Abbs rather earlier than most other far eastern birds, on 2nd. An **Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni* was also early, at Winterton (Norfolk) on 3rd; there were others at Redcar (Cleveland), on Fair Isle from 12th to 15th, at Spurn on 24th and on St Mary's on 25th, equalling last year's record crop. A **Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* reached Holy Island on 9th, at the beginning of its purple patch, but **Richard's Pipits** *A. novaeseelandiae*, perhaps conscious of their reduced status these days, were scarce: singles on Cape Clear, on St Mary's, at Sandwich Bay, at Sheringham, at Loch Spiggie (Shetland), on Fair Isle and at North Coates (Lincolnshire) totalling only nine. **Scarlet Rosefinches** *Carpodacus erythrinus* were few, on Tresco on 23rd, on Cape Clear on 19th and at Kinsale on 30th (the first on the Irish mainland). A **Yellow-breasted Bunting** *Emberiza aureola* was something special on Lundy from 18th to 26th September and one was on Fair Isle from 17th to 22nd September. **Rustic Buntings** *E. rustica* spread across the period, at Sumburgh on 30th September, Fair Isle from 2nd to 11th, Flamborough on 13th, Spurn on 22nd and Tresco on 23rd and 24th. **Little Buntings** *E. pusilla* were similar, with singles on Fair Isle—three between 26th September and 11th—at Sheringham on 11th, Fife Ness on 15th, Loch Spiggie on 21st and on Bardsey on 30th. **Lapland Buntings** *Calcarius lapponicus* reached Fair Isle on 19th (seven), Calf of Man on 10th and Hengistbury Head (two) on 3rd. There was a scattering of **Snow Buntings** *Plectrophenax nivalis* (plate 11). An **Arctic Redpoll**



Carduelis hornemanni was on Fair Isle on 15th and 16th, and on 11th **Bramblings** *Fringilla montifringilla* peaked at 500 there. **Crossbills** *Loxia* appeared in several places and later arrivals were scrutinised with more care when it became clear that **Parrot Crossbills** *L. pytyopsittacus* were about—some trapped or found dead (Orkney) were certain, but some others were more controversial; from 7th onwards there were reports from Fair Isle (up to six), Orkney (30 birds on Hoy), Vaxter (Shetland), Spurn, Wells, two at Humberston (Humberside) (plates 12 & 13), Grainthorpe and Ingoldmells (both Lincolnshire), the Outer Hebrides, and Ladybower (Derbyshire). **Red-breasted Flycatchers** *Ficedula parva* were very few in Scilly; between 5th (when there were two on Lundy) and 31st about 17 were reported elsewhere, in the northeast, Orkney, Donna Nook (Lincolnshire), Wells, Bardsey, Deal, Lowestoft (Suffolk) and at Hengistbury Head. **Blue-throats** *L. svecica* were at Fair Isle (two on 2nd), Shannon (Co. Clare) on 6th and at Waxham on 7th. A **Thrush Nightingale** *L. luscinia* occurred at Fife Ness. **Barred Warblers** *S. nisoria* came to Lundy on 29th September, Barns Ness (Lothian) on 10th, Waxham on 13th, Prawle Point on 9th and Gugh (Scilly) on 8th. Odd **Marsh Warblers** *Acrocephalus palustris* occurred on the Isle of





6 & 7. Chimney Swift *Chaetura pelagica*, Cornwall, October 1982 (S. C. Hutchings)

May and at Kingsbarns (both Fife), and **Icterines** *H. icterina* on Bardsey on 3rd and at Lowestoft on 7th. A **Waxwing** *Bombycilla garrulus* on Fair Isle on 12th added to the variety, as did the first **Blue Tit** *Parus caeruleus* there for 20 years on 5th; this latter species was equally surprising on North Ronaldsay (Orkney) on 11th, as was a **Great Tit** *P. major* on Orkney on 25th and two on Fair Isle on 6th: what a different world it is up there! **Fieldfares** *T. pilaris* reached 1,600 on Fair Isle on 20th, and **Redwings** *T. iliacus* totalled 500 on Holy Island on 9th, 950 on Calf of Man on 7th (with 500 **Song Thrushes** *T. philomelos* and 20 **Ring Ouzels** *T. torquatus*) and 3,000 on Fair Isle on 19th (with 600 **Song Thrushes**). **Whinchats** *S. rubetra* peaked at 70 on Fair Isle on 2nd. Finally here, we note that large numbers of **Short-eared Owls** *Asio flammeus* also came in, with 20 on Fair Isle on 9th and 23 on 19th.

More-southerly passerines and near-passerines

Tawny Pipits *A. campestris* were reported only from St Mary's on 2nd and St Leven on 25th. **Short-toed Larks** *Calandrella brachydactyla* were on Tresco, St Mary's (two) and at Loch Spiggie on 27th, and **Rose-coloured Starlings** *Sturnus roseus* were at Davidstow (Cornwall) on 6th and later at Portland Bill and on St Martin's (Scilly). A **Bonelli's Warbler** *P. bonelli* was also on St Martin's mid month and a **Subalpine** *S. cantillans* on St Mary's. There was a **Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius senator* on Tresco from 6th, **Hoopoes** *Upupa epops* at Holkham (Norfolk), St Andrews (Fife) and Hengistbury Head, an **Alpine Swift** *Apus melba* at Walton-on-the-Naze (Essex) on 3rd, and **Serins** *Serinus*

serinus on Fair Isle on 30th September and at Porthgwarra and St Leven (two) late in the month. A **Great Spotted Cuckoo** *Clamator glandarius* stayed at Spurn from 16th until the end of the month, and an **Ortolan Bunting** *E. hortulana* made landfall at Fair Isle on 21st. **Firecrests** *R. ignicapillus* came in very late to the southwest, with ten on Cape Clear on 29th and 30 at Hengistbury Head on 31st; **Black Redstarts** *Phoenicurus ochruros* appeared similarly, with 16 at Hengistbury on 31st, 40 at Hook Head on 30th and 30 at Cape Clear, 20 at Kinsale and 30 at Knockadoon (all Co. Cork) as well as some in the northern isles.

Paleartic wading birds

A **Marsh Sandpiper** *Tringa stagnatilis* made a long stay in Avon; a **Black-winged Pratincole** *Glareola nordmanni* at Mepal (Cambridgeshire) stayed only one day mid month. A **White Stork** *Ciconia ciconia* remained in Suffolk all month, and **Spoonbills** *Platalea leucorodia* turned up at Sandwich Bay (Kent) on 18th (two) and at Rutland Water (Leicestershire). A **Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* and a **Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea* were at Titchwell (Norfolk) on 26th, and a **Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax* was at Sandwich Bay on 23rd. Most amazing, however, were **Cranes** *Grus grus* at Dungeness on 30th, when 114 were recorded, including flocks of 33 and 40 at one time; next day there were ten there and five at Sandwich Bay. This is way above the best total of recent times, with the exception of 1963.

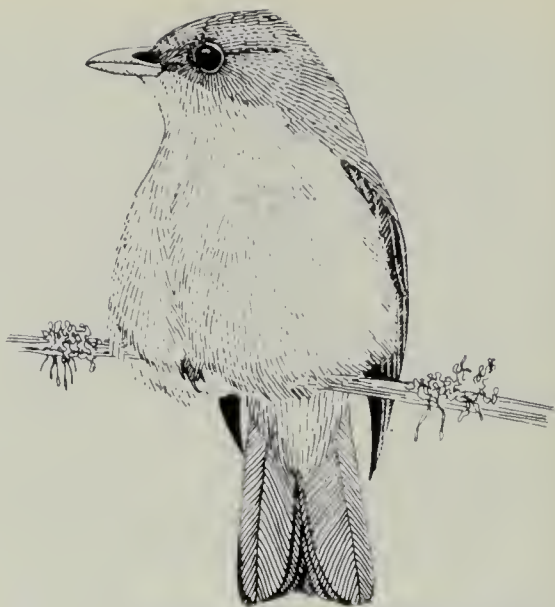
Birds of prey

A **Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus* was at Portland on 23rd and 24th, and **Gyrfalcons**

F. rusticolus appeared at Wadebridge (Cornwall) for three days and at Longfield Point (Co. Derry) from 9th into November. **Marsh Harriers** *Circus aeruginosus* reached many areas, including Lochmaben (Dumfries & Galloway) from 8th to 18th; a **Red Kite** *Milvus milvus* went over Minsmere on 21st; and **Honey Buzzards** *Pernis apivorus* passed Calf of Man and Lundy on 5th and Scilly about that time. **Rough-legged Buzzards** *Buteo lagopus* were associated with eastern arrivals in moderate numbers only, with records between 5th and 31st from Calf of Man, Mull (Strathclyde), and Dungeness, as well as northern and eastern localities, with five on Holy Island.

Seabirds and wildfowl

A **White-billed Diver** *Gavia adamsii* flew past Flamborough; St Ives (Cornwall) recorded a **Little Shearwater** *Puffinus assimilis* on 14th; and several **Cory's** *Calonectris diomedea* passed Scilly early in the month. **White-winged Black Terns** *Chlidonias leucopterus* stayed in Cornwall from September into October (plates 15 & 16) and at Abberton Reservoir (Essex) from 5th to 9th; the third Irish **Gull-billed Tern** *Gelochelidon nilotica* was on the Roe Estuary (Co. Derry) from 7th to 10th. Another spectacular tern record in this great tern year was of a **Bridled Tern** *S. anaethetus* passing St Ives on 14th. **Sabine's Gulls** *Larus sabini* were few: at Fair Isle (third ever), Filey Brigg (North Yorkshire), Dungeness and Clogherhead (Co. Louth) from mid September and two inland on 1st, at Mansfield (Nottinghamshire) and Belvide (Staffordshire). **Little Gulls** *L. minutus* included 201 and 300 on 25th and 27th September at Filey Brigg, and **Ring-billed Gulls** *L. delawarensis* appeared at Ballycotton (Co. Cork), St Mary's, and Hayle and Marazion (Cornwall). A scattering of **Grey Phalaropes** *Phalaropus fulicarius* was reported (plate 19). **Long-tailed Skuas** *Stercorarius longicaudus* included one inland at Ogston Reservoir (Derbyshire) on 18th and 19th September and another near Chenies (Buckinghamshire) in a field from 11th to 16th. More usual were others at Portland and Calf of Man in September, Witham Mouth (Lincolnshire) on 8th, and Cley and Sheringham on 14th. **Pomarine Skuas** *S. pomarinus* included 20 at Sheringham on 14th and one at St Anne's-on-Sea (Lancashire) on 31st. A total of 200 **Arctic Skuas** *S. parasiticus* also passed Sheringham in the memorable seawatch of 14th. Potentially best of all, though, was a

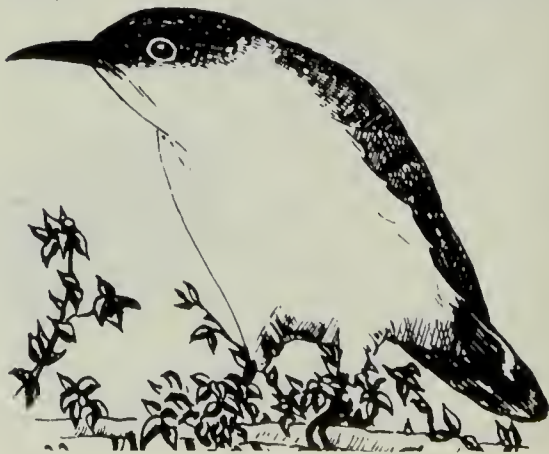


bird resembling **South Polar Skua** *Stercorarius maccormicki* at St Ives also on 14th. What a day!

Red-crested Pochards *Netta rufina* were noted at Abberton Reservoir and Rutland Water, where **Gadwalls** *Anas strepera* reached the notable total of 434, and **Ferruginous Ducks** *A. nyroca* occurred at Staines (Middlesex) and Abberton on 21st.

... and Nearctic invaders too

Added to the vintage year for 'Sibes', American landbirds also produced a really exceptional crop. After those already reported came another **Red-eyed Vireo** *Vireo olivaceus* on Cape Clear on 9th; a **Yellow-rumped Warbler** *Dendroica coronata* there from 19th to 20th and another on North Uist (Western Isles) on 24th; a **Grey-cheeked Thrush** *Catharus minimus* on Cape Clear on 19th, and at Voe (Shetland) on the same date, with two Pallas's Warblers (did it come from the east?); **Blackpoll Warblers** *D. striata* on St Mary's from 17th to 23rd (plate 8) and on Cape Clear from 24th to 29th; a **Scarlet Tanager** *Piranga olivacea* on St Mary's from 12th to 18th and a **Rose-**





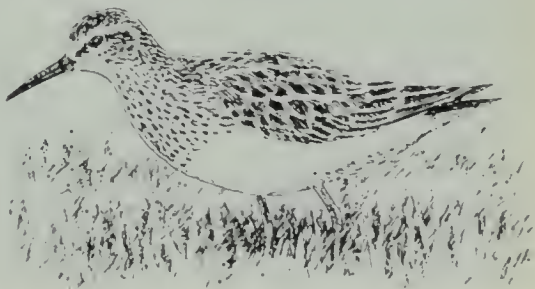
8. Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata*, Scilly, October 1982 (David Constantine)



9. Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi*, Humberside, October 1982 (P. A. Doherty)

breasted Grosbeak *Pheucticus ludovicianus* on Scilly on 28th. The **Northern Waterthrush** *Seiurus noveboracensis* reported earlier remained on Bryher (Scilly) until 4th. A **Black-billed Cuckoo** *Coccyzus erythrophthalmus* which arrived on St Mary's on 21st soon sickened, but was watched endlessly until it predictably died on 23rd, but a **Common Nighthawk** *Chordeiles minor* found things much more satisfactory on St Agnes,

staying from 20th right into November. One more addition to the Palearctic list came before there was time to draw breath: a **Chimney Swift** *Chaetura pelagica* was found at Porthgwarra on 21st and incredibly there were two from 22nd to 25th, then one until 27th (plates 6 & 7). Chimney Swifts and Pallas's Warbler seen together gave people a unique day on 23rd. Other Nearctic birds were a **Sora Rail** *Porzana carolina* on St Mary's on 27th September; a **Hen Harrier** *C. cyaneus* of the American 'Marsh Hawk' race *hudsonius* in Scilly on 21st; a **Goshawk** *Accipiter gentilis* of the race *atricapillus* also in Scilly (there was also a **Goshawk** on Bardsey on 6th), and three species of ducks: a female **Ring-necked Duck** *A. collaris* on Loch Spiggie on 21st, **Blue-winged Teals** *A. discors* at Blacktoft Sands (Humberside) and on Out Skerries (Shetland) in late September, and a **Surf Scoter** *Melanitta perspicillata* at Rosslare (Co. Wexford) on 24th. A **Great White Egret** *Egretta alba* at Penmaenpool (Gwynedd) for most of the month (plate 18) may well have been of Nearctic origin too. Waders included a few **Pectoral Sandpipers** *Calidris melanotos*, mostly in late September: four on the east coast, two on Lundy, one on Bardsey, one on Skokholm (Dyfed), three in Scilly and one in



Nottinghamshire. A **Stilt Sandpiper** *Micropalama himantopus* was watched at Truro (Cornwall) in late September, and more **Baird's** *C. bairdii* reached Fair Isle from 17th to 21st September, Staines from 15th and Co. Cork (plate 21); a **White-rumped Sandpiper** *C. fuscicollis* was at Marazion (plate 22); and a **Wilson's Phalarope** *Phalaropus tricolor* in Co. Cork in late September (plate 14). A **Western** *C. mauri* or perhaps

Semipalmated Sandpiper *C. pusilla* was very well-watched at Felixstowe (Suffolk) from 30th into November and should prove a valuable lesson if it is worked out; an **Upland Sandpiper** *Bartramia longicauda* was on St Agnes from 18th to 24th. **Buff-breasted Sandpipers** *Tryngites subruficollis* included three at Davidstow on 6th (plate 17) and others in Co. Cork (plate 20). There was a **Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularia* on



10. Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* of one of eastern races *S. t. maura*/*S. t. stejnegeri*, Humberside, October 1982 (P. A. Doherty)

11. Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*, Cornwall, October 1982 (G. P. Sutton)



Tresco on 5th and 6th, while another, at Clonakilty (Co. Cork) from 7th to 10th, was only the third for Ireland. A **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* stayed at Minsmere from 7th to 14th and one was at Newquay (Cornwall) on 24th. Three **Lesser Golden Plovers** *Pluvialis dominica* were found at Davidstow. Finally a **Killdeer** *Charadrius vociferus* was noted on St Martin's from 21st, completing a mind-blowing month which requires several re-readings before everything will sink in!

Latest news

The first half of December was very quiet. The major news concerned sea-ducks discovered inland: two **Eiders** *Somateria mollissima* at Daventry Reservoir (Northamptonshire) and another (new to the county) at Brogborough Clay-pit (Bedfordshire), **Velvet Scoter** *Melanitta fusca* (and also **Great Northern Diver** *Gavia immer*) at St Ives (Cambridgeshire) and **Long-tailed Duck** *Clangula hyemalis* at Barkers Lane Gravel-pit (Bedfordshire).

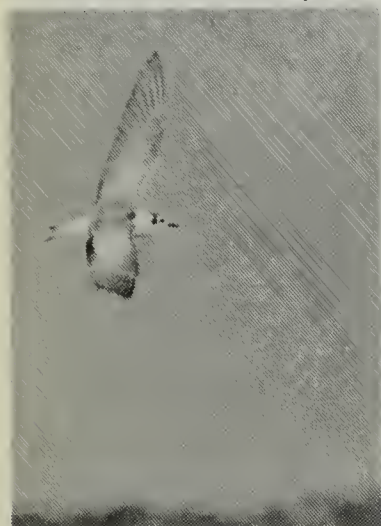


12 & 13. Male Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus*, south Humberside, October 1982 (Graham P. Catley)





14. Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor*, Co. Cork, September 1982 (Richard T. Mills)



15 & 16. Juvenile White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*, Cornwall, September/October 1982 (W. R. Hirst)

17. Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis*, Cornwall, September/October 1982 (G. P. Sutton)





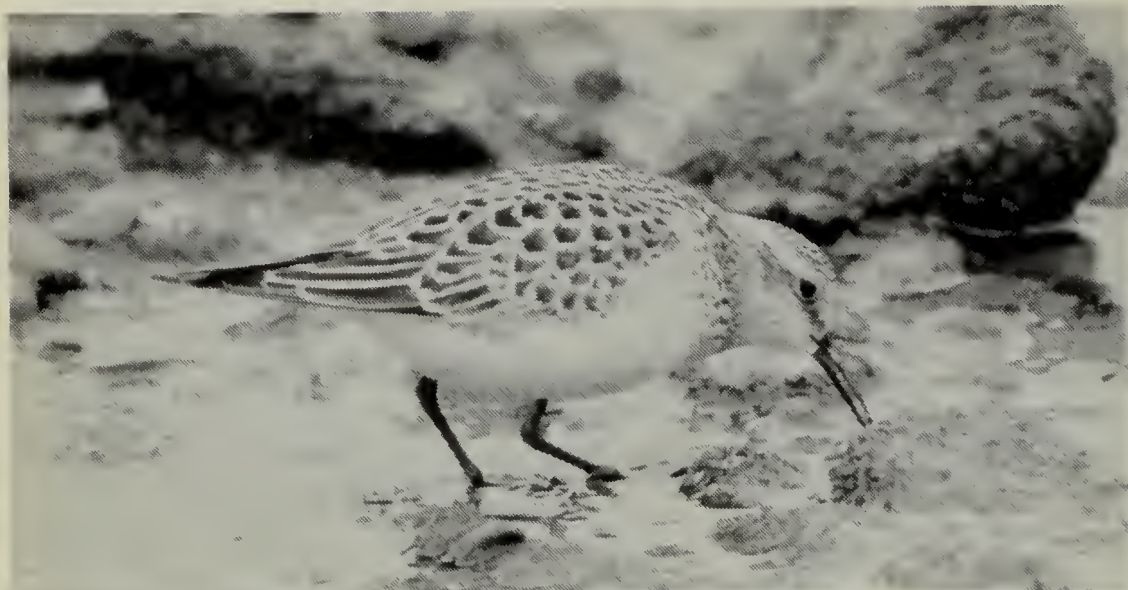
18. Great White Egret *Egretta alba*, Cwynedd, October 1982 (R. G. Smith)



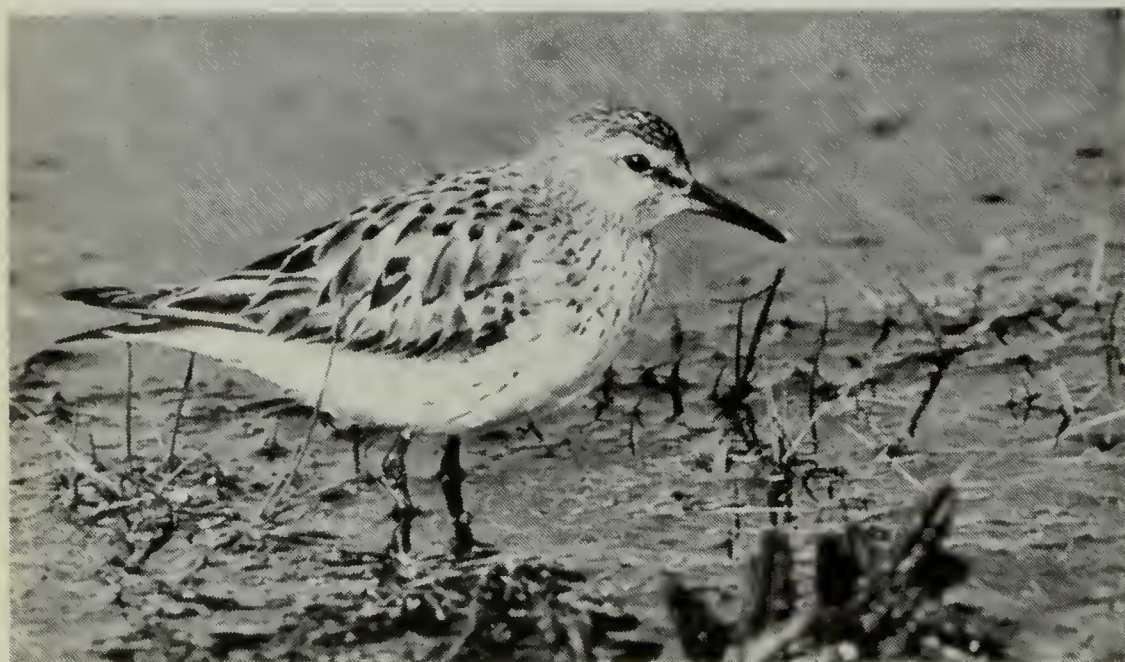
19. Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*, Cornwall, October 1982 (David Constantine)

20. Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis*, Co. Cork, October 1982 (Richard T. Mills)





21. Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii*, Co. Cork, October 1982 (Richard T. Mills)



22. White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis*, Cornwall, October 1982 (David M. Cottridge)

Reviews

Hilbre; the Cheshire Island: its history and natural history. Edited by J. D. Craggs. Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, 1982. 306 pages; 31 black-and-white plates; many line-drawings. £20.00.

Hilbre, Middle Eye and Little Eye are three tiny sandstone islands (totalling only 6.1 ha) lying in the mouth of the Dee Estuary just off the Wirral peninsula. Hilbre is, however, world famous for its high-tide roosts of waders which provide a spectacle which is a magnet for birdwatchers and, especially, bird-photographers. In its 19 chapters, this attractive, profusely illustrated and well designed book covers everything from the island's history, flora, invertebrate and vertebrate fauna, to the fishes and marine mammals of the surrounding waters, its ornithology

and its ecology. There are tables and lists, graphs and histograms, maps and diagrams, photographs galore and line-drawings by Laurel Tucker. As a source of reference or for browsing by those who know or would like to know this enchanting area, this book would take some bettering. The price, however, is high, so that many would-be purchasers will, I suspect, become library-borrowers instead.

Observatory aficionados and migration students will find the histograms showing distribution through the year of 137 species a fascinating source of information for comparison with other stations (such as Cape Clear Island and Lundy, both previously shown by the same methods), but I personally found it very irritating that some species are plotted from January to December and others from July to June, so that it is not possible to compare species (even ones plotted side by side) at a glance, as should surely be the intention with histograms, since the left-hand peak in one will be spring and in the other will be autumn. This is a minor fault in an otherwise excellent book, but must be mentioned in this review with the hope that, by doing so, other authors are prevented from repeating this misconceived method of presentation.

This book summarises a huge amount of work on many aspects of the natural history of Hilbre, especially since a bird observatory was founded there in 1957. It would be marvellous if workers at other sites of bird observatories could follow this example and devote a proportion of their energies to writing up and publishing the information which they spend so much time collecting. Well done Hilbre! Well done, and thank you, Professor Craggs!

J. T. R. SHARROCK

Bird Habitats in Britain. By R. J. Fuller. T. & A. D. Poyser, Calton, 1982. 320 pages; over 50 black-and-white plates; 53 line-drawings; over 100 diagrams and maps. £13.00.

This outstanding work, the summary of an investigation into the relative values of sites of ornithological interest in Britain, will be welcomed by all who have a concern for nature conservation. The task was begun by the BTO in 1973, the author being appointed the national organiser; its completion was commissioned by the Nature Conservancy Council. Birdwatchers were invited to draw attention to sites of known ornithological interest, the result of which was the compilation of a final Register of over 4,000 sites. These sites were examined at all seasons of the year by competent observers for a period, in most instances, of two years or more. The habitat factors governing bird-life being considered of prime importance, the report we now have describes in detail the main habitats (54 in number) of birds in Britain, and the factors affecting ornithological communities associated with them.

The interpretation of the site reports presented some difficulties, as many sites included more than one habitat, making it impossible to analyse them satisfactorily with regard to the bird communities they supported. Many of these heterogeneous sites have, however, a high conservation merit. For all sites, regardless of their nature, three criteria were chosen for their ornithological evaluation. The first, population size, and the second, the species-richness of the site, could raise the question whether they gave a bias, other things being equal, in favour of large sites. The remaining criterion, species-rarity, was based on national rarity, an allowance being made for the presence of breeding species with fewer than 1,000 pairs in Britain. Could not the 10-km records in the *Atlas* have been taken, with the upper limit of, say, 100 records, and an appropriate weighting be given to the species according to the number of its records? This might have raised the grading of some sites at the county level.

The evaluation of the sites gave 1,081 (27%) of at least regional importance, and a further 1,817 (45%) of county importance; the total of these is comparable with about 3,500 SSSIs now scheduled. Assuming that the latter remain unchanged in number and the ornithological sites all become SSSIs, there could be complaints from other naturalists; on the other hand, most of the ornithological sites would have a considerable additional natural history interest. The sites are reasonably well distributed, but inevitably partly reflect the distribution of birdwatchers. It is admitted that 'some important sites were overlooked, especially in remote areas'. There will be some disappointment that the list of the sites of at least county importance is not given, but at this stage it would no doubt be unwise to publicise it. Complete copies of the Register are, however, lodged with the RSPB and the Nature Conservancy Council.

The reports of sites homogeneous in their nature allowed all the valuable information they contained to be used in analysing the nature of bird communities. For the widespread habitats this is done on a regional basis, with the results shown in tabular form.

The presentation we are now given must be much to the satisfaction of the many workers who spent long days making site reports for the Register, following as it did so soon after the fieldwork for the *Atlas*. What now remains to be done? The *Atlas* has prompted many county birdwatchers to record on a tetrad basis, but should they not also be giving some attention to investigating more sites similar in their nature, as we seem far from solving the intriguing problem of a species-area relationship, if any, of birds in Britain. It would appear that the ornithological sites of importance are on the whole larger than the scheduled SSSIs. If it could be shown that more (or for that matter less) would be conserved in two or more small sites than in another of similar nature but with an area larger than that of the small sites combined, a valuable contribution might have been made to the cause of nature conservation.

Bird Habitats in Britain is published at a reasonable price with the high standard of production that we have come to expect from its publishers. It is refreshing to see a book on bird-life with photographs of their habitats rather than of the creatures themselves. This is an essential in such a work, enabling the reader to refresh his memory with regard to the nature of the many habitats in Britain in which birds live.

JOHN G. DONY

The Hertfordshire Breeding Bird Atlas. By Chris Mead and Ken Smith. HBBA, Tring, 1982. 128 pages; 112 species maps; many line-drawings. £5.00.

Between the bendy covers and the often highly original scraperboard illustrations by Kevin Baker, there is a wealth of information in this most comprehensive publication. The book continues the run of county atlases (Kent, London and Bedfordshire), and future atlas organisers could do worse than copy its style and presentation. It seems quite clear now that we in Britain will not be content until we have plotted everything we can find by 2×2 km squares.

With a few exceptions, each species has a map which documents by tetrads its breeding (in proven, probable and possible categories) during the survey years of 1967 to 1973. This is followed by a summary of its habitat range and broad status. The book is novel for including the Common Birds Census results for many of the commoner species—graphs showing fluctuations in the breeding population, both nationally and in Hertfordshire over the past 20 years; having this information so easily available has caused my copy to become well thumbed already.

There are very helpful introductory chapters on the major geological, physiographical and habitat regions of the county, and maps which plot such things as rivers and streams, open water, developed areas, woodland, arable farmland and grassland, again by tetrads. Several of these are then reproduced on a loose-leaf map for easy reference when examining any of the species distributions. The authors go even further in spoon-feeding their audience, as often these non-bird data maps are reproduced alongside the species maps so that, for example, under Green Woodpecker there is a map of woodland; under Lapwing a map of arable farmland; and under Canada Goose a map of lakes. Though I realise the difficulty, it is a great pity that atlas species maps do not indicate a few major towns. Though my early birdwatching days were spent in parts of Hertfordshire, I do not know the county well, and it would be so much more helpful when looking at a species map to relate the distribution instantly to a few key towns.

It is also a pity that the authors did not take the opportunity of having a stab at population assessments for a number of species. Again I realise the problem, but such estimates have been attempted nationally, and who better to go to than the authors of the most thorough survey of the county for their views on current populations and trends. It would have proved helpful from a conservation point of view.

One point worries me about any detailed mapping: the publication of information on rare breeding bird sites. The authors have obviously considered this carefully, but I wonder if they have gone far enough? Without risk of drawing people's attention unnecessarily (and after all the information in this atlas is now ten years old), it is perhaps unwise to have included dots for species such as Little Ringed Plover, Woodlark, Black Redstart and Gull Bunting.

Well worth having; I had bought mine long before I received the review copy.

RICHARD PORTER

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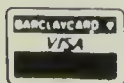
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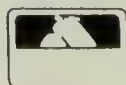


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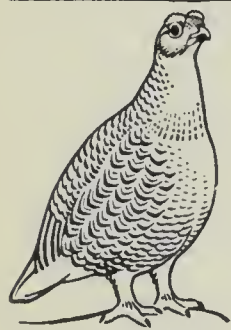
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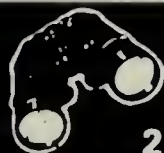
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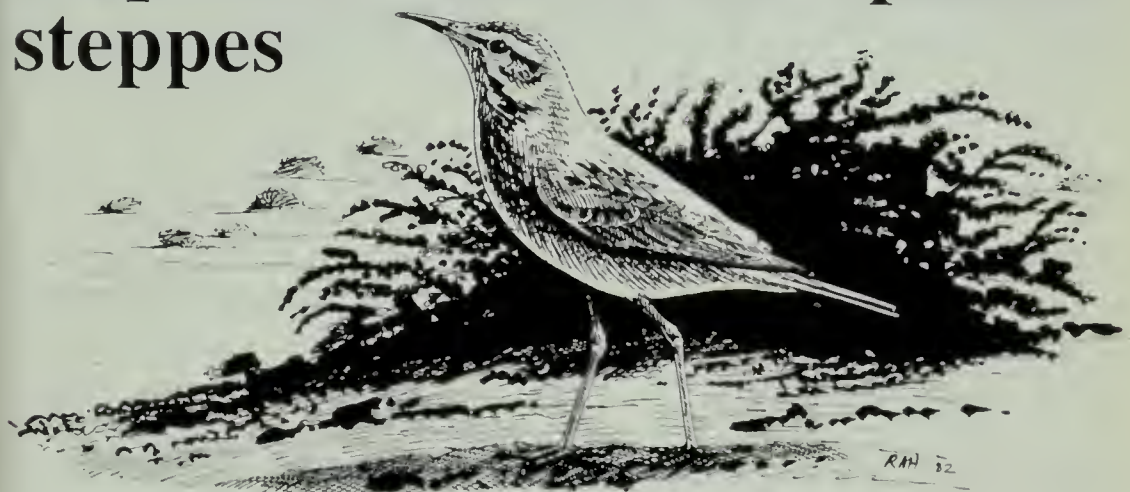


British Birds

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Dupont's Lark in the Spanish steppes



A. Aragüés and A. Herranz

The lack of sightings and records of Dupont's Lark *Chersophilus duponti* in the Aragonese steppe-lands of northern Spain in the last 20 years led us to think that this species was in a precarious situation in the country bordering the Ebro valley. Within its limited world range (fig. 1), Dupont's Lark is, however, one of the least studied of western Palearctic birds and, in Spain, reports are scarce. This century, in Aragon, there had been only three records: in 1918, 1967 and 1974. Dupont's Lark was, however, well known to birdcatchers in Saragossa province where, up to the 1960s, it was frequently caught and killed in the traps, together with large numbers of, particularly, Calandra Larks *Melanocorypha calandra* and Skylarks *Alauda arvensis*. In that period, between 4% and 6% of the larks killed in traps were 'rociines', an onomatopoeic name, very suggestive of the bird's song, by which Dupont's Lark was known in the region.

With the widespread ploughing of the steppes since 1960, Dupont's Lark seemed to have disappeared, and no birdcatchers had given us any information on or reported captures of it since 1973. On 20th March 1980, however, we discovered a pair in the province of Teruel. On 26th May 1980, in Huesca, Miss A. Baker saw two at a site known to German ornithologists; one of us visited this and located five Dupont's Larks. In 1981, more thorough observations were made in three provinces: at one site in Huesca,

we saw four and five on two visits in April, and four on 21st October; at three sites in Saragossa, we found, respectively, one on 18th April and one on 18th and 19th July, four on 17th June and two on 25th October, and up to four in June and one on 9th and 12th November; and, at one site in Teruel, we observed four on 22nd May, five on 14th October and three on 20th October. After 12th November, we visited the same localities on various occasions, but did not see the species. Dupont's Lark used to be captured in oat stubble fields, which might explain this lack of sightings in the steppes after mid November.

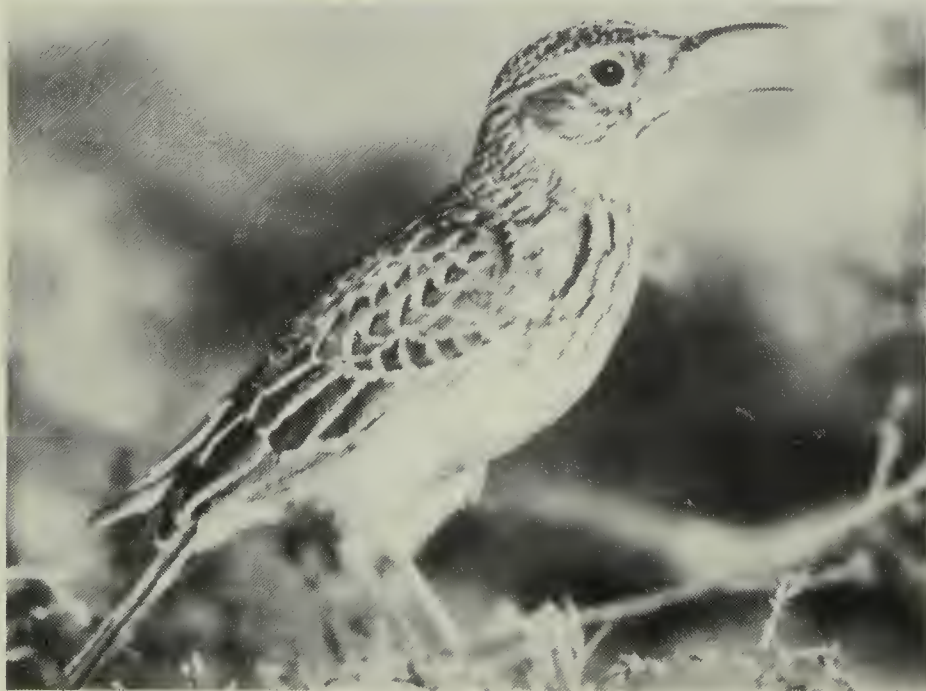
Vegetation at sites

The vegetation at the sites is low scrub (rarely more than 50cm high) consisting of, variously, greenweed *Genista*, thyme *Thymus*, glasswort *Salicornia*, feathergrass *Stipa*, rosemary *Rosmarinus*, saltwort *Salsola*, and wormwood/mugwort *Artemisia*. These plants form more or less dense clumps, with wide open spaces between them, which the larks use as tracks or pathways along which they can run freely. The sites, varying from 40ha to 60ha, are flat or slightly undulating, and form 'islands' in the midst of large expanses of cultivated land.

Method of capture

To capture Dupont's Larks we have used snare-nets, consisting of a metal frame 22mm across with a hemp net attached, baited with winged ants and placed among the vegetation and along the tracks used by the larks. Unlike the method we use for other species, we cover the traps and hide them beneath earth we have dug up; this earth attracts their attention. As the larks may remain for some time inside the snares, they could die of heat on hot days with the sun shining full on them; we have, therefore, trapped in

23. Dupont's Lark *Chersophilus duponti*, Spain, November 1981 (C. Sanchez)





24. Dupont's Lark *Chersophilus duponti*, Spain, November 1981 (M. A. Bielsa)

this way only after the end of September. Using this method, we have captured a total of 11 Dupont's Larks.

Field characters and behaviour of species

In addition to the long, decurved bill, the following are conspicuous features: white outer tail feathers contrasting with dark inner ones; a white supercilium; and, at close quarters, a whitish-grey streak, broken by dark grey feathers, in the shape of a narrow band stretching from the nape and



Fig. 1. World distribution of Dupont's Lark *Chersophilus duponti* (after Etchécopar & Hüe 1967 and Harrison 1982) (drawn by R. A. Hume)

behind the ear-coverts down to the throat. In its robust build, Dupont's Lark resembles a *Galerida* lark, but with a longer neck; an *Alauda* lark is slenderer, with a longer tail.

To locate Dupont's Lark, one must look about 50-70m ahead down the little trackways among the vegetation, where it runs very fast to take cover, sometimes in distant scrub. It runs far more rapidly than the other lark species which share the same habitat, and so is not at all easy to spot. Its territory is easily located by the bird's characteristic call or song. Dupont's Lark is a very early riser, and is especially active in the early and late hours of the day; if one visits a suitable area in the middle of the day, one may neither see nor hear it even if it is present.

Measurements and wing formula

We measured nine of the 11 Dupont's Larks which we captured, with the following results:

MEASUREMENTS Wing 93-104mm; tail 61-70mm; length 169-197mm; bill (to feathering) 18-21.5mm, (to skull) 21-24mm; bill plus skull 43-48mm; tarsus 23-26mm; hindclaw 9.5-15mm; weight 34.3-46.8g.

Three individuals killed by birdcatchers were sexed. The wings of the two males measured 102mm, and that of the female 93mm.

WING FORMULA 1st primary very short, 8-10mm shorter than primary coverts; 3rd, 4th and 5th equal longest; 2nd 1.0-3.5mm; 6th 4.5-11mm; 7th 13-16mm; 8th 18-21mm; 9th 20-21mm; 10th 23-27mm; 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th primaries emarginated (in one case, 6th only slightly). Longest tertial lying between 6th and 7th primaries, 9-12mm from wing-tip and 30-32mm from tip of tail.



25. Dupont's Lark *Chersophilus duponti*, Spain, November 1981
(M. A. Bielsa)



26. Dupont's Lark *Chersophilus duponti*, Spain, November 1981 (C. Sanchez)

Protection

The sites where we made our observations are threatened by farming development. One site in the province of Saragossa is only 8km from a city and less than 1 km from the city rubbish tip; it is owned by an important industrial concern which tips out its waste nearby. The salt-lake site in Teruel gets smaller every year as more land comes under the plough; only high-salinity areas are left alone. The site in Huesca is surrounded by

extensive cornfields and has so far been left untouched because the layer of soil is very thin; sheep, however, frequently range all over it. Protection of these and other, similar, sites is an urgent priority. We are confident that we shall be able to locate further breeding territories of Dupont's Lark in northern Spain, and intend to carry out a more exhaustive study of the species.

Acknowledgments

We thank Miss A. Baker and Jeremy Brock for additional observations, and Miss A. Baker for translating our typescript from the Spanish. *British Birds* thanks Janice Robertson for translating correspondence from Spanish into English.

Summary

The current known status of Dupont's Lark *Chersophilus duponti* in northern Spain is given, with additional information on earlier records. Notes on site vegetation, method of capture, field characters, behaviour and measurements of the species, and threats to sites are also given.

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A. Aragüés, Paseo María Agustín, 28-A, 2^o Izqda, Saragossa-4, Spain
A. Herranz, Tenor, Fleta 73, Saragossa, Spain

Fieldfares breeding in the Peak District

R. A. Frost and
Philip Shooter



It is widely known that in recent years Fieldfares *Turdus pilaris* have bred or attempted to breed in the Peak District on several occasions, but the localities, timing and, sometimes, the authenticity of the records, have often been vague or open to doubt. In an attempt to put the record straight, we have checked all relevant statements in local bird reports with the original sources (so far as possible) and have contacted ornithologists known to have significant information.

We have used the term 'Peak District' loosely. Rather than follow the exact boundaries of the National Park, we have dealt with the larger area of the southern Pennines south of a line roughly from Penistone to Saddleworth. There, Fieldfares have bred in a variety of localities, both on the millstone grit and on the carboniferous limestone, but, except on the Staffordshire moors, have not been known to nest twice in any one locality. Hence, localities are revealed, as there seems to be no threat to the species' welfare by so doing, except at the Staffordshire sites.

The first known breeding of Fieldfares in Britain was in 1967, when a pair nested in Orkney (Balfour 1968), and in the same year a pair probably bred in Co. Durham (Sharrock 1976). Small numbers have continued to nest fairly regularly in Scotland and in parts of England. Perusal of the reports of the Rare Breeding Birds Panel in *British Birds* suggests that the Peak District is probably the most regular breeding area for English Fieldfares.

The first recent year for which there is evidence of summering in the Peak District was 1967, but there are two older records worthy of mention. On 1st May 1921, Ralph Chislett found a pair of Fieldfares near Hathersage which appeared to be the owners of a partly built nest, but they had gone a week later (Fitzherbert 1922). During 19th-21st June 1946, up to five were seen at Wigley (Harwood 1946); these could conceivably have been a family, though the account gives no suggestion of this.

The records below concern definite or probable breeding occurrences (following the criteria used in Sharrock 1976) or sightings during the months of June and July. May records are not included, as migrant Fieldfares are often recorded well into that month, sometimes in flocks; likewise August, as immigrants are sometimes recorded then. Of course, with such a common winter visitor, it could be argued that some of the midsummer records may merely refer to late, lost or sick stragglers. Perusal of records for an adjacent lowland county, Nottinghamshire (in the *Nottinghamshire Bird Report*, 1967-1980), however, revealed that there are no July records and only three for June, with none later than 2nd, except for an injured individual on 13th. Furthermore, although the Redwing *Turdus iliacus* is a quite common winter visitor and passage migrant in the Peak District, there is only one definite midsummer record, in June 1976 (Frost 1978). Thus, it seems likely that the midsummer records of Fieldfares in the Peak District refer to potential colonists.

Most of the definite breeding records have come from upland areas of the millstone grit region, the only exceptions being from Hay Dale in 1970 and Foolow in 1980, both areas lying on the carboniferous limestone. The Foolow site is upland pasture bounded by stone walls with occasional trees and bushes. Hay Dale is a small, dry limestone valley in a similar area. All of the other sites are upland pasture, moorland, moorland cloughs, or open oak woodland, with the exception of a pair probably breeding in a village in north Staffordshire in 1975.

Only a few nests have been found. The likely nest of 1974 was in a birch *Betula* at about 3 m from the ground. It closely resembled the nest of a Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus*, with large amounts of loose sheep's wool hanging down the front. The village birds of 1975 probably utilised a holly

Table 1. List of summer records of Fieldfares *Turdus pilaris* in the Peak District since 1967

- All of the Staffordshire records were submitted by F. C. Gribble and M. Waterhouse
- 1967 Barbrook, one throughout July (R.A. Frost).
- 1968 No records.
- 1969 Moorfield, Glossop, pair carrying food regularly to ditch in field, but impossible to investigate further because of presence of bull (J. E. Robson).
- 1970 Hay Dale, Wheston, adult with two recently-fledged young on 14th June (R. A. Frost).
- 1971 No records traced despite statements to the contrary in the *Derbyshire Bird Report* and in Frost (1978).
- 1972 No records.
- 1973 Mellor, pair prospecting possible nest-sites, 12th May (*Cheshire Bird Report*, 1973).
 Little Don Valley, one on 9th June (I. Francis).
 Ramsley Moor, one on 29th June (R. A. Frost).
 Stannington College, one on playing field on 24th July (A. Hancock).
- 1974 Langsett, pair summered (D. Gosney, D. Herringshaw).
 Barbrook, adult in June (S. Jackson).
 Leash Fen, pair in June and what was thought to be used nest found later (Dr A. J. Deadman, P. Shooter).
 North Staffordshire, one pair bred and reared four young. A second pair probably bred 3 km away.
- 1975 Bingham Park, Sheffield, one on 4th June (R. A. Butterfield).
 Rivelin, one on 14th June (D. & J. W. Atter, D. Gosney, D. Herringshaw).
 Edale, pair with four recently fledged young on 28th-29th June (M. L. Plater).
 Barbrook, one on 6th July (M. E. Taylor).
 North Staffordshire, one pair bred close to 1974 site. Second pair present.
- 1976 Wharnccliffe, one pair attempted to breed unsuccessfully; apparently incubating from 28th April to 8th May, but later thought to have been subjected to predation, possibly by Carrion Crows *Corvus corone* (Baverstock *et al.* 1977).
 Three Shires Head, one flushed from heather on bank of stream on 8th May, thought to have come from nest but not possible to investigate further (P. Shooter).
 Langley, three in June (*Cheshire Bird Report*, 1976), thought to refer to 11th (J. P. Guest *in litt.*).
 Wortley, one during 6th-18th July (N. Waring, R. Waring).
 Baslow, one on 18th July (M. A. Beevers).
 North Staffordshire, one pair nested.
- 1977 North Staffordshire, one pair nested about 1½ km from original site.
 Longdendale, one on several days in June (J. E. Robson).
 Alport Dale, three on 2nd June (T. Barlow, E. J. Smith).
 Agden, parties of 11 and five on 25th July (J. Laver, H. Laver).
- 1978 Longdendale, one seen carrying food in summer and one found plucked near nest of Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* (J. E. Robson).
 (The statement in *The Sheffield Bird Report* 1977-78 that two pairs probably bred in North Derbyshire can no longer be substantiated.)
- 1979 Snake, adult found freshly-plucked at nest of Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* on 6th June (J. E. Robson).
 Holmesfield, two on 18th July (Sorby Natural History Society).
- 1980 Foolow, one nestbuilding on 18th May, but not present a few days later (A. & B. Hancock).
 Rivelin Valley, pair defended territory, but abandoned it in early May (K. Clarkson).
 Moscar, nest, with about five large young almost ready to fly, about 6 m up in birch, on 7th June (J. W. Atter).
- 1981 Ladybower, two 'chacking' at Sparrowhawk in June; considered to be pair with fledged young (P. K. Gill, D. Herringshaw).

Ilex aquifolium. The Wharncliffe nest of 1976 was in the fork of a sessile oak *Quercus petraea* at about 9 m. It was described as 'a loose, untidy structure somewhat resembling that of a Mistle Thrush, but a little larger and bulkier, and apparently constructed of large quantities of grass and other plant fibres interwoven with stalks of bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* and sheep's wool. The inner rim of the nest also appeared to be lined with this latter material, large quantities of which hung down on one side, making the whole structure appear very untidy. An assortment of quite large oak twigs formed a platform into which the rest of the nest material was woven' (Baverstock *et al.* 1977).

The 1980 Foolow bird had constructed a freshly built, but unlined, nest of twigs and grasses, which resembled an untidy Mistle Thrush nest, at about 4½ m on the side branch of a hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*. The Moscar nest of the same year was at about 6 m in the fork of a birch.

Acknowledgments

We should like to thank all the observers for their records, and in particular J. W. Atter, F. C. Gribble, J. P. Guest, D. Herringshaw, J. E. Robson, Dr A. H. V. Smith and M. Waterhouse; F. C. Gribble and D. Herringshaw for their comments on the manuscript; and Mrs Carolyn Marriott for typing the text.

Summary

Since 1967, Fieldfares *Turdus pilaris* have been seen in summer in the Peak District in every year except 1968, 1971 and 1972. Breeding was proved in 1969, 1970, 1974-78 and 1980, but never for more than two pairs in any one year. The last few years have, however, produced relatively few records.

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Before accepting this paper for publication, we consulted the Rare Breeding Birds Panel. That body was not unanimous, but the majority view—with which we concurred—was that the lack of repetition and the generally haphazard nature of the breeding attempts made it completely safe to name most sites, thus facilitating checks by observers in the area who may have additional information for past years. We are of the firm view that unnecessary secrecy breeds speculation and curiosity, which can lead to damaging disturbance. In this case, we and the authors favour openness. EDS

Dispersion of Buzzards in Speyside

D. Weir and N. Picozzi



The dispersion of the Buzzard *Buteo buteo* in Europe and of the closely-related Red-tailed Hawk *B. jamaicensis* in North America is almost identical in different parts of their respective ranges. In winter, they may be wholly migratory, as in northern Scandinavia (Olsson 1958) and Alberta (McInville & Keith 1974), or they may be partly migratory, as in West Germany (Mebs 1964) and Michigan (Craighead & Craighead 1956). Sedentary populations are found where the food source is more or less stable (Newton 1979), as on Dartmoor (Dare 1961) and in California (Fitch *et al.* 1946). In summer, a breeding population of Buzzards might have a clumped nesting distribution in limited woodland and share the open hunting range, as in Denmark (Joensen 1968), or each pair may occupy a defended home range (Type A territory of Hinde 1956), as on Dartmoor, or the distribution may be in some way intermediate between these extremes, as in the New Forest (Tubbs 1974).

We studied Buzzards in Speyside, Inverness-shire, from March 1969 to August 1972, with the aim of investigating the role of social behaviour in the dispersion of this species. Buzzards were known from an earlier survey (DW unpubl.) to be sedentary in the valley and to show territorial behaviour throughout the year. In the present paper, we describe the mapping of territories and give examples of how new pairs became established. Other aspects concerning breeding performance, mortality and social behaviour upon which many of the results here are based have been documented previously (Picozzi & Weir 1974, 1976; Weir & Picozzi 1975).

Mapping of home ranges

Buzzards were observed throughout the 173 km² study area described in Picozzi & Weir (1974), but we put greater emphasis on two parts of it (A and B) at one end and in the centre of the valley, since the area was so large. These were chosen for the convenience with which observations could be made in them.

We started by finding the nests in the spring of 1969. The range of each pair was then plotted as follows: every time that a bird associated with a nest was seen, its position and flight path were plotted on a 1:63,360 Ordnance Survey topographic map; thereafter, any pair or adult which flew from or into a range already plotted for a pair was assumed to be the occupier of that range and the mapped range was extended accordingly. The home ranges of resident single birds were plotted in the same way. Additional information on range size was obtained by inducing interactions using captive decoy Buzzards of both sexes (Weir & Picozzi 1975).

It was not possible to identify individuals on every occasion, but observations of colour-marked birds, or individuals with distinctive plumage, showed that, at least while alive in the study area, they were always associated with the same home ranges. There were no records of recognisable individuals changing mates, and we assumed that all adults behaved in the same way. We probably failed to record all the changes of individuals associated with all home ranges, but observations of birds which replaced known individuals showed that they respected essentially the same boundaries as the previous residents.

Since birds might use their ranges differently in summer (March-

27. Buzzards *Buteo buteo* at nest with young, Dumfriesshire, summer 1975 (Robert T. Smith)



August) and winter, we plotted observations separately for these periods. The observations for each summer and the previous winter were combined to produce a map of the annual home ranges, but, in the absence of sophisticated techniques for following birds (i.e. transmitters), each year's maps were necessarily incomplete. At the end of the study, however, it was apparent from the best-mapped ranges that there had been only minor changes in boundaries from year to year. As differences were probably due to deficiencies in mapping, we superimposed all the maps of each home range to produce a cumulative map of home ranges. This would have overestimated the size of some ranges, but we believe gave a better assessment of the size and distribution in the valley than did the annual maps. Ranges were measured from the final map, using transparent 1 mm² graph paper.

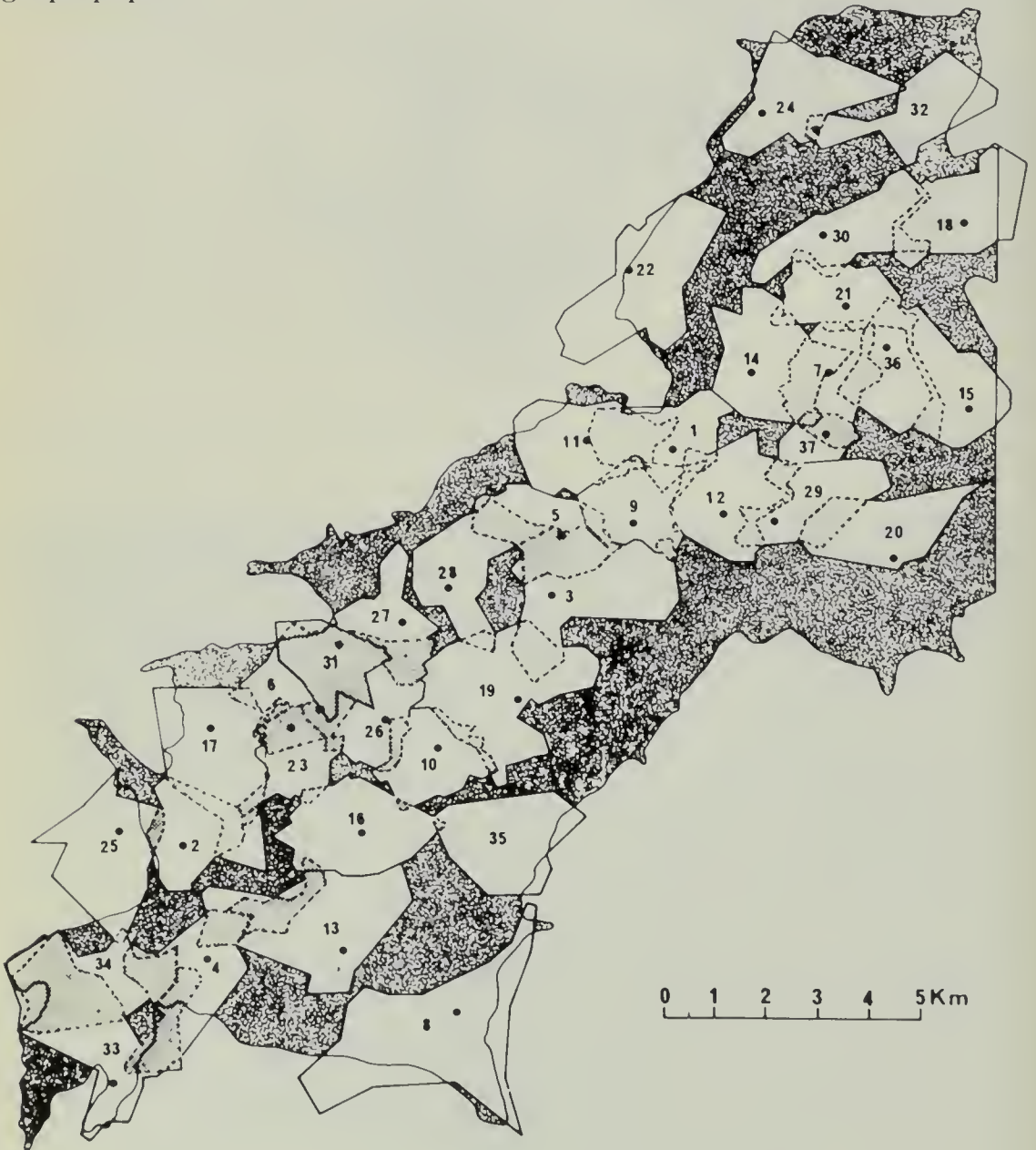


Fig. 1 Territories of 38 pairs of Buzzards *Buteo buteo* held in the Spey Valley, Inverness-shire from 1969 to 1972. (Overlap between territories stippled, unoccupied ground shaded, ● centre of the group of nests used from 1969-72)

Results

Dispersion of nests

As spacing behaviour was known to be important for Buzzards in Speyside (Weir & Picozzi 1975), a regular rather than a random dispersion of nests through the available nest habitat was anticipated. This was examined for (a) nests in 1972, when we were confident all were found, and (b) the central point of all known nest sites in each territory. The test applied was the GMSD statistic of Brown & Rothery (1978) for nearest-neighbour distance (NND). The results for the less sensitive value (G) given by this test were significant and for the more sensitive value (S) near significant: (a) $n=27$, $G=0.755$, $P=0.015$, $S=0.672$, $P=0.055$; (b) $n=35$, $G=0.727$, $P=0.03$, $S=0.732$, $P=0.08$. A further test, based on minimum inter-nest distance, also gave results significantly greater than the expected value had they been randomly dispersed, and we conclude that nests in Speyside were dispersed in a regular manner.

Territories of pairs

All the activities seen for each pair of Buzzards in Speyside took place within a home range with defended boundaries and hereafter we refer to them as territories. Aggressive encounters with neighbours or intruders were recorded at all times of year. From observations of such encounters, we mapped more than one-quarter of the boundary in 23 (68%) of the territories shown in fig. 1, and more than half of the boundary in 15 of these territories. The part of the range in which the birds were most often found varied seasonally. The mean minimum range defended on sub-areas A and B in summer was 175 ha and in winter was 105 ha (table 1). Much of the ground on the valley sides was not used in winter, and, at that season, Buzzards were most often seen on the flood plain or on terraces of the valley floor.

Table 1. Mean size (ha) of summer and winter territories of pairs of Buzzards *Buteo buteo* in Speyside sub-areas A and B mapped from summer 1969-72

Year	Sample size and range in brackets	
	Summer	Winter
1969	155 (6, 110-215)	110 (5, 65-190)
1970	135 (11, 90-205)	110 (12, 60-200)
1971	190 (14, 105-355)	100 (13, 45-140)
1972	195 (13, 75-275)	
All years	175 (44, 75-355)	105 (30, 45-200)

The maps of the individual summer and winter ranges of the pairs associated with each group of nests in areas A and B and their positions relative to each other are shown in figs. 2 and 3. The total sizes and amount of mutual overlap of territories for 1969-72 are shown in table 2. A maximum of 38 territories was held by pairs at some time from 1969 to 1972. Their mean size was $396 \text{ ha} \pm 160 \text{ (s.d.)}$; Territory 15, which was divided between two pairs in 1971, was considered here as two separate territories (15 and 36).

Table 2. Size and extent of mutual overlap in 38 territories of Buzzard *Buteo buteo* in Speyside from 1969 to 1972

Territory numbers are as in Picozzi & Weir 1974; any discrepancies with that paper concerning territory size arise from a critical reappraisal of the original field maps which enabled previously deferred judgments of range ownership to be made. Such differences as there are in no way affect our previous conclusions

Territory number	Cumulative size (ha)	Mutual overlap (%)	Territory number	Cumulative size (ha)	Mutual overlap (%)
1	224	46	20	322	17
2	298	38	21	272	30
3	564	51	22	659	0
4	453	57	23	276	69
5	304	33	24	375	1
6	355	79	25	439	4
7	224	68	26	397	64
8	929	0	27	365	51
9	302	29	28	353	26
10	300	28	29	387	45
11	415	18	30	331	10
12	435	28	31	296	82
13	599	26	32	298	0
14	466	25	33	681	62
15	278	22	34	466	75
16	486	19	35	389	5
17	582	20	36	266	48
18	353	10	37	115	16
19	633	25	38	168	77

The altitudinal range in the valley was not great and there were no correlates with territory size other than that nine of the 14 largest extended up to 380 m (the upper limit of any nests), while only four of 24 smaller territories did so ($\chi^2 = 5.47, P < 0.02$). Although an association was shown between the amount of farmland in a territory and breeding performance (Picozzi & Weir 1974), there was none between it and territory size.

The overlap between adjacent territories was greatest in area B (fig. 3). There was an outcrop of epidiorite in the middle of this area of otherwise mainly acidic rocks, and rabbits *Oryctolagus cuniculus* were particularly abundant on the grassland overlying it. The mean overlap for all 38 territories was 29%, but this was overemphasised since we assigned the entire overlap between territories to each of those involved; if we had assigned an equal share of the overlap to each territory, the average extent would have been about halved.

The boundary of the study area was set arbitrarily at 380 m because no nest site was known above this altitude in 1969. The total area enclosed was 173 km², and all but 12 km² of the range plotted for the 38 pairs was below this altitude. The unoccupied ground in the study area was mainly above 275 m and consisted of open moorland dominated by heather *Calluna vulgaris* and some conifer woods. By contrast, any farmland and broad-leaved woods above 275 m were occupied; such areas were mainly on south-facing hillsides. About 61 km² of the valley below 380 m was unoccupied by territorial Buzzards. Except in areas where Buzzards were removed by repeated poisoning (Picozzi & Weir 1976), unoccupied ground

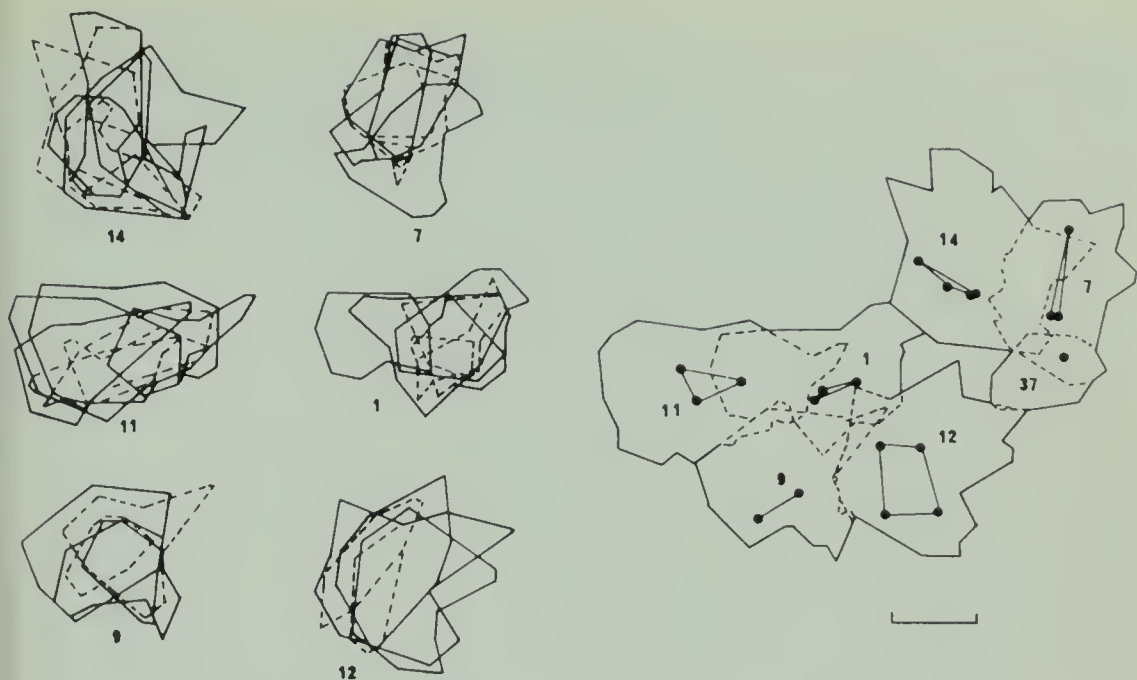


Fig. 2. Territories of Buzzards *Buteo buteo* in sub-area A in winter (broken lines) and summer (solid lines) superimposed to show total area held from 1969 to 1972. Their positions in the study area relative to each other are also shown. (Broken lines denote overlapping boundaries.

● nest sites. Territory 37 was occupied only in summer 1971.) Scale indicates 1 km

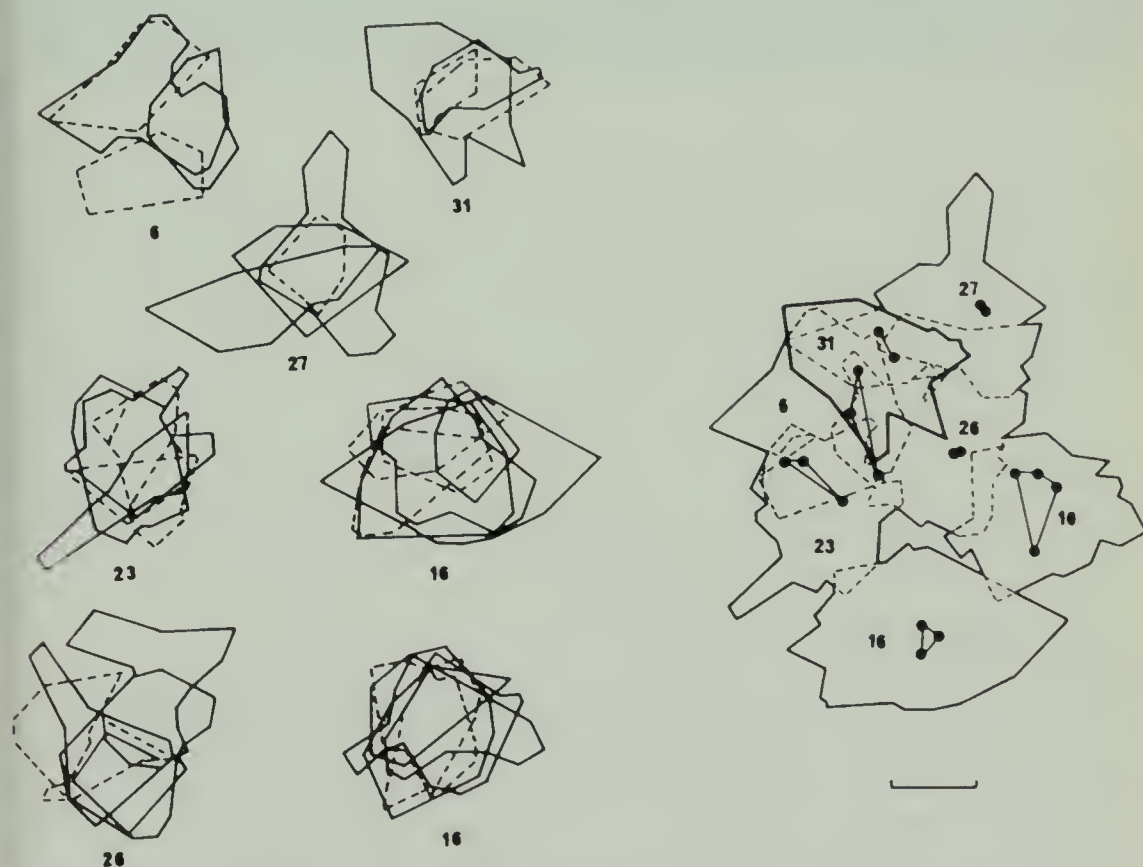


Fig. 3. Territories of Buzzards *Buteo buteo* in sub-area B in winter (broken lines) and summer (solid lines) superimposed to show total area held from 1969 to 1972. Their positions in the study area relative to each other are also shown. (Broken lines denote overlapping boundaries.

● nest sites. Territory 31, which was formed almost entirely on previously occupied ground, is shown with a solid outline.) Scale indicates 1 km



28. Buzzard *Buteo buteo* at nest with young, Sutherland, May 1964 (*Harold Auger*)

was limited to extensive open heather moorland, young conifer woods and the vicinity of villages, tourist developments, roads and well-used paths. The surfaces of lochs were usually within territory boundaries, as disputes were often seen above them. All farmland, broad-leaved woods, mature and semi-mature conifer woods were occupied, as were most of the areas of moor, young conifers and marsh with limited public use and where there were well-grown trees or pylons for high perches.

The maximum density of territorial Buzzards in the valley (in 1971) was 38 pairs on 173 km² (2.2 pairs per 10 km²). If the 61 km² not occupied by pairs are excluded and the 15 km² of range of pairs which extended beyond the study area boundaries are included, the density was 3.0 pairs per 10 km² of occupied ground.

Formation of new territories

During the study, three new nesting territories were established and vacant ones were reoccupied. Many of the birds were not colour-marked or were seen only briefly, but at least ten pairs occupied these three territories for periods of 15 to over 400 days. Seven pairs were found between 21st October 1970 and 15th February 1971, and three of them initiated the only new nesting territories studied, in spring 1971.

Each of the three nesting pairs established the territory differently in relation to adjacent pairs:

(1) Territory 37 was established on previously unoccupied ground.

(2) Territory 15 was divided into two discrete territories (15 and 36); the pair in the new territory nested unsuccessfully and left and the entire area was then again held by a single pair.

(3) Territory 31 was established on ground which lay almost entirely within the overlapping boundaries of three adjoining territories (figs. 1 and 3). The first attempt to nest (in 1971) failed and the pair was then joined by three first-year birds. In August 1971, a pair of young adults in their second year, which probably comprised two of the 'intruders', established a partly overlapping territory and gradually excluded the original pair from the entire territory. This territory became permanently established, with some successful nests up to 1979, but intrusions by other Buzzards remained exceptionally frequent. It was on the rich feeding area overlying epidiorite.

We found no other new territories established in this way and territories 36 and 37 probably represented the more usual mode of establishment.

There was no attempt to nest in two territories. In one, we found five adult Buzzards and seven first-year birds dead near poison baits from March 1970 to May 1973, which explained failure to breed; Buzzards bred in this territory before the use of α -chloralose baits (Picozzi & Weir 1976). In the other, there was no evidence that Buzzards were killed; the main potential nest wood was small (2 ha), but an old nest was found in it in 1967. In winter 1970/71, there was strong competition for this territory, and it was held briefly by at least three different pairs between October and March, but by none thereafter. We could not explain the failure to nest.

Table 3. Winter territories or home ranges of 11 first-year Buzzards *Buteo buteo* in Speyside, Inverness-shire, 1969-72

Dates present	No. of days	Probable sex	Mapped range (ha)	Approx. overlap with adjacent pairs (%)
4/11/69—20/1/70	77	♀	24	0
26/1/70—25/2/70	30	♀	26	0
30/1/70—6/3/70	35	♂	13+	0
27/10/71—7/12/71	42	♀	41	0
19/1/70—11/3/70	53	♂	33	0; c. 50% mutually with next two birds
22/1/70—24/2/70	33	♂	12+	as above
22/1/70—15/2/70	24	♀	12+	as above
3/11/70—22/1/71	80	♂	45	10
22/1/71—3/3/71	41	♀	39	50
14/9/71—4/3/72	174	♀	extensive	100
30/1/72—22/2/72	23	♀	extensive	100

In territories other than these five, paired occupants seen in any half-year period were usually at least 15 months old. The few first-year birds were mainly females which had replaced occupants that disappeared outside the normal time of year for replacement (Weir & Picozzi 1975, p. 126). By contrast, in the five 'new' territories, the ten pairs included two first-year males and two or three first-year females. Eight adult occupants, or adults which tried to displace them, were certainly (five) or probably (three) in their second year, which was more usual for new occupants in a territory (Picozzi & Weir 1976, p. 195). New territories were, therefore, apparently established, or vacant ones reoccupied, in autumn and winter, by a mixture of immature and young adult birds, but they were not held for long unless the male was adult.

Ranges of single birds

We describe here home ranges which were established and occupied for more than 20 days by single birds. Eleven birds found occupying home ranges in winter were all in their first year (table 3). The ranges were occupied for 24-174 days from their discovery. Birds were first seen from 14th September to 30th January (median date 20th December) and were last seen from 7th December to 11th March (median date 13th February). Transient first-year birds were common in September-November, rare in December-February and uncommon in March-April (Picozzi & Weir 1976, table 2); it might be common for first-year birds which survived autumn dispersal to occupy temporary winter home ranges.

All these 11 birds were individually recognisable: two of local origin were already colour-marked, and five more were caught and colour-marked while resident. The remaining four were recognisable on size and plumage. All occupied ranges below 275m were in largely open country, mainly farmland with some trees. Six well-mapped home ranges were 24-45 ha each (mean $35 \text{ ha} \pm 8$). Seven of the birds defended territories (cf. Weir & Picozzi 1975, fig. 7); these did not overlap the boundaries of neighbouring adult pairs, but three of them overlapped each other. Six of the seven territories were on those three of the 15 estates in the study area where Buzzards were killed most often. This suggests that the opportunity for single, first-winter birds to defend a territory was mainly associated with artificial removal of adults. The length of time these young birds held territories may have been affected by the times of year when poison baits were set.

The remaining four birds did not defend their home ranges against all Buzzards, but had a gradation of relationships with the adult pairs within whose territories they partly or wholly lived. One male defended a home range against both adult and first-year transients, but not against the adult pair on whose territory it partly encroached. It was sometimes driven off by the adult male. The second bird, probably a female, gradually extended its undefended home range into the territory of a pair and was only once seen to be driven off. The third bird, a female, lived entirely within the territory of a pair to which it was not related, in February and March. It was not attacked and sometimes accompanied the pair and even fed with them on the same carrion. It was not seen to be courted, but the situation resembled polygyny among adults (Picozzi & Weir 1974; Weir & Picozzi 1975). In October, as an adult, it was one of a territorial pair here. The fourth bird also lived entirely in the territory of a pair, and would have been mistaken for a dependent offspring except for its wing tag number which showed that it was from an adjoining territory. Cases like the fourth would probably have been noted elsewhere if they had been common.

The first, second and third cases, and similar ones for shorter periods, were all in territories recently occupied by a pair of adults, following persecution. Thus, these birds, like the ones which defended winter territories, occurred in areas where adult territorial behaviour was reduced. Such opportunities were limited in the study area, and it was clear that most were exploited. No single adult was found occupying a territory,

although such birds were common in autumn and winter. They rapidly replaced members of previous pairs if they disappeared, and might attempt to displace members of existing pairs. The implication was that single adult birds were mainly nomadic in the area in winter.

It was difficult to observe single birds in spring and summer, because territorial adults were most aggressive then, and single birds, unless transient, behaved cryptically, rarely using high perches or flying above the woodland canopy (Weir & Picozzi 1975, p. 126 *et seq.*). In a given locality, single birds might be seen only once or, if seen more often, might not be definitely recognisable as the same individual.

The main features common to 12 different birds in summer 1971 and 1972, when single birds were seen most often and many had wing tags, were: (a) all were seen below 275m, (b) ten (83%) were seen only or most often in broad-leaved or mixed woods, (c) eight (67%) were found at the edge of, or outside, the current summer territories of pairs, and (d) none was seen to defend a territory. Some of these birds may have been resident all summer, together with others which we did not see; we saw four colour-marked first-year males in spring, but did not see them all summer. In autumn, however, we found four colour-marked second-year males (thus of the expected age) in the same four places. Not all single birds were resident: we saw transient adults and first-year birds in summer, and found a succession of birds of both age classes at poison baits throughout the summer.

Discussion

We assumed that territories could be mapped sufficiently accurately from observations alone, but it was impossible to be certain without a parallel telemetry study. There was circumstantial evidence, however, from two sources, that our assumption was justified. First, Fuller (*in litt.*) has shown for the Red-tailed Hawk of North America that territories plotted by the two methods were in agreement, although telemetry gave far more detail on the use of the territory throughout the year. Secondly, colour-marked territorial birds in Speyside were seen away from their territories only after replacement; we knew of two such examples in four years and in neither case was the bird known to have occupied another territory.

Our cumulative maps probably over-represented territory size, as the method did not allow for possible alterations in boundaries from year to year. It was for this reason that seven of the 39 nests in areas A and B lay within the area of overlap of the cumulative mapped ranges (fig. 1). In the years when these nests were occupied, the boundaries of the neighbouring pairs did not overlap. Even so, figs. 1-3 show a remarkable and perhaps unexpected stability between years, despite some changes of ownership. Furthermore, we believe that much of the apparent overlap can be explained by the greater area over which birds ranged when soaring, compared with that defended passively at ground level by perching conspicuously near the boundary, or overtly by low-level chasing of intruders. The actual territory of the Buzzard was probably an 'inverted, truncated cone' as described and illustrated for the Verreaux's Eagle *Aquila*

verreauxi by Gargett (1975). As we plotted all flights on topographic maps, over-representation of territory size at ground level was inevitable. In hindsight, it would have been better to have kept observations of perched and low-flying birds separate from those soaring above, say, 100 m.

The amount of overlap of the seasonal territories from 1969-72 in sub-areas A and B indicated the constancy of the territories, as did the manner in which new territories were formed (i.e. in only one case encroaching substantially on an existing territory). Even this example was exceptional, as the ground occupied supported an unusually high population of rabbits; Hinde (1956) gave examples of the indefensibility of food-rich areas. Finally, the general pattern of territories remained stable, despite a temporary increase by four territories in 1971 which did not take place at the expense of the existing territories. While we do not suggest that our cumulative maps are completely accurate, we feel they reflect adequately the dispersion of territorial birds in the valley.

The maximum density of territorial pairs in Speyside (2.2 to 3 per 10 km²) was higher than that in the New Forest (1.3 per 10 km², Tubbs 1974) and the British average of 0.5 per 10 km² given by Moore (1957), though, as Brown (1976) pointed out, this figure must have been a considerable underestimate for occupied range, as much unsuitable Buzzard ground was included in Moore's survey. Speyside density was lower than the 4.3 per 10 km² on Dartmoor or the 6.7 per 10 km² near Castell, Unterfranken (Mebis 1964), or that of many other Continental studies (see summaries in table 3, Mebis 1964; table 7, Brown 1976). Nearest-neighbour distance between the centres of nest groups (mean 1.5 km) was greater than that on Dartmoor (1.1 km, calculated from fig. 10, Dare 1961) and Castell (0.7 km, calculated from fig. 4, Mebis 1964). One-third of our study area was unoccupied, mainly because it was subject to disturbance or lacked suitable nest woods or perches or, on the north-facing slopes, there was possible interaction in the few suitable nest woods with Golden Eagles *Aquila chrysaetos* at the lower limit of their range (Picozzi & Weir 1974). The generally regular spacing of nests and stable numbers of birds indicated that suitable ground was fully occupied.

The year 1971 was exceptional when Buzzard numbers increased temporarily. We believed that field voles *Microtus agrestis*, which are the main prey of Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus*, a major food of Great Grey Shrikes *Lanius excubitor* and an important item for Buzzards, particularly over winter, were abundant and readily available over the previous, almost snow-free winter. Circumstantial evidence was that more Kestrels than normal stayed in the study area and, exceptionally, we also found 11 shrikes wintering. An abundance of voles may have helped to bring Buzzards into particularly good breeding condition, so explaining the large clutch sizes that year (Picozzi & Weir 1974), and perhaps the generally longer periods for which fledged young remained in the natal territories (Picozzi & Weir 1976).

Although 1971 was exceptional, clutches and broods in Speyside were generally greater than have been found elsewhere, probably as a result of a good spring and summer food supply (abundant young rabbits) and extra daylight hours available for hunting in Scotland (cf. Lack 1947). Why then,

with such a high output of young from the valley, was the density of resident pairs not higher? Presumably, behaviour of territorial adults stabilised the numbers of breeding pairs through (a) regular spacing of nesting territories, and (b) restricted opportunities for single birds to occupy fixed ranges and for young adults to establish new territories by encroaching on existing occupied ground; while (c) their behaviour also tended to prevent first-year birds from becoming members of territorial pairs, although they appeared to have been physiologically capable of doing so (two first-year females probably laid, and two non-breeding first-year males dissected in May and June 1973 had enlarged testes).

Although social behaviour influenced the spacing, size and age structure of the breeding population, it might have been a mechanism through which one or more other factors operated rather than a limiting factor *per se* (Watson & Moss 1970). For instance, the implicitly larger than usual number of small rodents in winter 1970/71 was associated with a temporary increase in the numbers of pairs of Buzzards, and with larger Buzzard clutches in the following spring. This suggests that density was limited by winter food supply, and such a hypothesis is supported by studies of raptors elsewhere (Newton 1979). The difficulty with this is that, if food is limited in winter and plentiful in spring and summer, why are Speyside Buzzards residents, rather than partial migrants as in Germany (Mebs 1964)? Buzzards probably stayed in Speyside because food was available all year. The disadvantage of a possible reduction in prey availability in the valley in winter was almost certainly outweighed by the advantage of remaining on an established territory instead of attempting to obtain a new one each spring.

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Summary

The dispersion of Buzzards *Buteo buteo* was studied in 173 km² of the Spey Valley, Inverness-shire, from 1969 to 1972. A maximum of 38 pairs was resident and defended home ranges (territories) which averaged 396 ha. Territories were defended all the year and occupied 65% of the valley. They included most of the farmland, broad-leaved and mature conifer woodland available below 275 m. Unoccupied ground was mainly above 275 m on north-facing slopes, or was extensive open heather moorland or young conifers. The dispersion of nests differed significantly from random, with a mean nearest-neighbour distance of 1.5 km between the centre of groups of nests in each territory. New nesting territories were established in three different ways in the winter before the breeding season in the best year. Many single birds were nomadic, but some single first-winter birds occupied ranges averaging 35 ha, mainly on open ground below 275 m and near the edge of vacant or recently occupied territories of pairs. In summer, some single birds lived secretively in small ranges below 275 m in broad-leaved or mixed woods near the edge of territories of pairs. Dispersion was effected by territorial behaviour and density was probably associated with prey availability in winter.

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Identification pitfalls and assessment problems

2 Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*

Three main pitfalls need to be borne in mind when identifying Savi's Warbler: the song is inaccurately described in several field guides; the noise made by a particular species of cricket is closely similar to the song of Savi's; and Grasshopper Warbler *L. naevia* can look unstreaked.

Breeding habitat of Savi's is lush marsh vegetation, probably always including extensive beds of reeds *Phragmites*, which provide its usual song-perch. Like other *Locustella* warblers, it runs, walks or moves about fur-



29. Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*, Spain, May 1957 (Eric Hosking)

tively, with jerky actions and much nervous twitching of its wings and cocked tail, but when singing it adopts a tail-down posture like that of other reed-inhabiting warblers. As with any migrant, it can appear in abnormal habitat (as did one—of the eastern race *fusca*—watched by myself and others in November 1981, scurrying mouse-like through a flower bed of the field school at Elat, Israel, with not a reed in sight), but extra caution is obviously advisable over suspected Savi's Warblers which occur in dry habitats more usually associated with Grasshopper Warbler, perhaps especially if a singing, territorial individual is involved.

The reeling song of Grasshopper Warbler has a pervading high-pitched

or tinny component (which, however, may be inaudible to some ears) and, although very fast, the individual notes are readily discernible, so that the song is perhaps best described as a trill or fast rattle. The bursts of song always start abruptly (without any introductory notes), and, although they probably average much longer than those of Savi's, duration of each burst of song in itself may be misleading as a distinction between the two species. The song of Savi's lacks the tinny quality, is lower-pitched, and the individual notes merge into a rather insect-like buzz. The song is introduced by a usually accelerating, but variable, utterance of soft 'twick' notes, audible only at close range. The song is typically in short bursts of less than 30 seconds, but spells of more than a minute are not unusual. In 1980, Patrick Sellar made some useful comparisons on behalf of the Rarities Committee: from recordings played at slow speed, he counted Grasshopper Warbler's song at between 24 and 31 separate notes per second, whereas Savi's was faster at between 46 and 50. In the main descriptive text for Savi's in Peterson *et al.* (1954, *A Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe*), the song is incorrectly described as 'slower' than Grasshopper Warbler's. This is presumably a misprint for the correct 'lower' which appears in the brief text alongside the illustration of Savi's Warbler, but the error has apparently been copied and perpetuated in several other field guides, and has undoubtedly been the source of the confusion apparent in several records of Savi's Warbler submitted to the Rarities Committee.

John F. Burton (*in litt.*) has drawn attention to the fact that there is a remarkable similarity between the song of Savi's Warbler and the stridulation of Roesel's bush cricket *Metrioptera roeselii*. In Britain, this insect typically inhabits marshy areas in coastal southern and eastern England, but it has also been recorded elsewhere and in other habitats.

Contrary to the impression given by the illustrations in most field guides, the streaking on the upperparts of Grasshopper Warbler is rather subdued, and at a distance (or even at close range, especially in bright sunlight) the streaking can 'disappear', giving apparently uniform, Savi's-like plumage. Grasshopper Warbler, however, typically shows buffish or yellowish basic coloration, rather than the warm brown tones of Savi's Warbler.

P. J. GRANT

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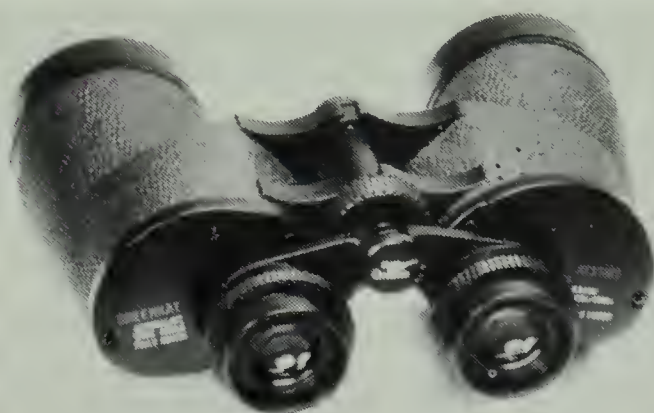
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species, according to Sir Digby Pigott, responsible for this strange light—is so useful a bird, this “luminous” example should, in the interests of science, have been secured and submitted to some competent authority for examination.—Eds.’

‘Miss L. J. Rintoul and Miss E. V. Baxter, two very keen and competent ornithologists, following Mr. Eagle Clark’s example, have spent a month (September 9th–October 8th, 1907) in bird-watching on an island. The Isle of May was the chosen station, and the results were really remarkable.’ The records that followed included Barred Warbler, Yellow-browed Warbler, Red-backed Shrike, Scarlet Grosbeak (Scarlet Rosefinch) and Lapland Buntings.

‘RARE BIRDS AT FAIR ISLE.—This island is becoming a second Heligoland under Mr. Eagle Clark’s able “management.”’ (*Brit. Birds* 1: 296, February 1908)

Mystery photographs



74 A warbler scuttles through the reed fringe and stops, partly obscured by reed stems. Some pretty quick assimilation of field characters is called for before it dives back into the depths. Those who have studied the different structure and facial patterns of the various families of warblers will be the most likely to make a correct diagnosis: the facial pattern differences are often so subtle that they have to be studied from photographs or in close field views, because most field guide illustrations are not up to the task.

The bird seems at home in the reeds. This, and the long bill and generally sleek lines suggest an *Acrocephalus* warbler, but two things are wrong. First, the facial pattern is odd (not the usual short supercilium and pale lores), and, secondly, the wing and tail proportions seem wrong. The supercilium on this bird is thin, arching over the eye, and there is a pale crescent below and in front of the eye, above a thin, dark moustachial stripe. This gives a rather mean expression which is a general—if subtle—feature of many *Locustella* warblers. The facial pattern is also like that of Cetti’s Warbler *Cettia cetti*, but it does not seem so contrasting as on that species. Compared

with the total length of the bird, the wings are rather long: this is another subtle feature of *Locustella* warblers, and rules against *Acrocephalus* and Cetti's Warbler, which are comparatively short-winged. Fairly confident now that it is one of the *Locustella* warblers, the rest is easy. This bird is unstreaked above and below, pointing straight to Savi's Warbler *L. luscinioides*. This one was photographed in its favourite reed-bed habitat at Stodmarsh, Kent, by Jeff Pick in June 1977. PJG



30. Mystery photograph 75. Identify the species. Answer next month

Notes

Unusual feeding action of Great White Egret On 8th August 1979, at Messingham sand quarries, south Humberside, D. Suddaby and I were watching a Great White Egret *Egretta alba* when it began to feed in a manner not mentioned in *BWP*. Standing knee-deep in the water and staring into it with its head held up, it suddenly began to paddle and flap its wings violently, throwing its head and neck back and forth and from side to side; it flapped its wings alternately, giving a windmill-like effect, all the movements seeming totally uncoordinated. At times, it jumped clear of the water. This was followed by stabs at prey on the surface, and further bouts of flapping and jumping. After picking prey, it sometimes



rested for up to a minute before starting again. Through a telescope, we could see that it was catching and eating a number of small frogs *Rana* or toads *Bufo*, and the behaviour was presumably designed to disturb them from the weed. After 10-15 minutes, the egret went to sleep. Two Grey Herons *Ardea cinerea* fed normally nearby.

GRAHAM P. CATLEY

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Presumed hybrid Glaucous × Herring Gulls in Kent Between 8th January 1981 and 12th January 1982, I saw eight large gulls (seven first-winters and one second-winter) in east Kent showing mixed characters of Glaucous *Larus hyperboreus* and Herring Gulls *L. argentatus*. Similar examples have been described and discussed previously (e.g. *Brit. Birds* 71: 80-82; 272-274; 279). They varied from typical Glaucous to mid-range Herring Gull in structure, the large individuals tending to be the most Glaucous-like: deeper-chested, broader-winged, thicker-necked and heavier-billed and with the same 'lumbering' flight action. Each bird was paler than typical first-winter Herring Gull, with all dark markings reduced and many entirely absent. Examples are shown in fig. 1 and described below.

First-winters WINGS All showed blackish to pale dusky-brown on outer three or four primaries only. Three showed dark subterminal 'arrowheads' on outer primaries, typical of first-year white-winged gulls. Remaining remiges varied from pale 'milky-coffee' to off-white, unmarked (except for narrow dark bar on inner secondaries of one individual). Wing-coverts as pale as most Glaucous on four individuals, with markings varying from slightly darker centres (as Herring) or fine, even barring (as Glaucous) to no marking at all. Two had dusky greater coverts, forming slightly contrasting bar across inner wing (a feature occasionally seen on apparently pure Glaucous). One also had dusky area on coverts of outer wing. Underwings uniformly pale. TAIL Uniform off-white in two, others

ranging from thick blackish sub-terminal band to uniform dusky-grey with pale fringe. UNDERPARTS Generally pale greyish-buff or sandy-buff, occasionally lightly streaked on breast. Undertail-coverts heavily barred on at least three individuals. HEAD Uniform sandy-buff or greyish-buff, but four Glaucous-structured individuals showed pale off-white chin and face of that species. BARE PARTS Bill dirty-pink to pale flesh with black tip (but wholly blackish on one). Iris dark and legs pale flesh or pink.

Second-winters Differed mainly in having very pale grey mantle, scapulars and back (some browner first-summer feathering admixed) and broken tail band, as on third-winter Herring. Primary coverts and greater-covert bar dusky.

A further first-winter individual is included in fig. 1 to demonstrate the potential extremes of plumage and structure that hybridisation may produce. This perfectly Herring-structured, dark-billed bird showed all the plumage tones and markings of a first-winter white-winged gull except for the usual arrowhead markings near the tips of the primaries. Owing to its structure and the lack of any real suggestion of Herring Gull in the plumage markings, it was felt that, though presumably a hybrid, its origins were too unclear for a reasonable assessment to be made. Iceland Gull *L. glaucoides* was possibly involved, though hybridisation with Herring Gull seems unlikely on breeding range. Glaucous × Iceland, though unrecorded, is not impossible, but other combinations such as hybrid × hybrid have to be considered. Ingolfsson (1970) remarked that some Icelandic hybrids are inseparable from pure Glaucous in the field; some presumably from pure Herring too. Thus, a really thorough examination of any white-winged gull should be made before identification is attempted.



Fig. 1. Plumage and structural variations of presumed hybrid Glaucous *Larus hyperboreus* × Herring Gulls *L. argentatus* and Herring × white-winged gulls *L. hyperboreus* or *L. glaucoides* (M. P. Sutherland)

In the mixed 'Glaucous' and Herring Gull colonies of northeastern and southern Iceland, an estimated 80% of breeding adults are hybrids, the remainder being pure Herring Gull (Ingolfsson 1970), while hybrids are the second-commonest gull after Glaucous at Reykjavik in winter (R. Henson *in litt.*). Virtually all Glaucous Gulls recorded in Kent are first- and second-years, adults not normally coming so far south. It is normal for up to 10% of all adult Herring Gulls in Kent in winter to be Herring Gulls of the Scandinavian race *L. a. argentatus*. Equal numbers of large adults of the west European *L. a. argenteus* are also present at this time, presumably north-western birds, while immatures outnumber adults by a ratio of 60:40. It seems logical to assume that some hybrid offspring from the Icelandic colonies inherit the dispersive tendencies of their Herring Gull parent and that this characteristic should result in more hybrids reaching Britain than pure Glaucous Gulls (from the northwest). My own results in this period (only three Kentish first-winter Glaucous, compared with seven hybrids) appear to support this. I have also seen occasional large, pale-backed adult Herring Gulls in Kent with reduced black on their wingtips and heavy bills (one in this period), which may have been hybrids from the same points of origin.

I feel that the large reservoir of hybrids in Iceland is much more likely to be the source of these 'pale Herring Gulls' than aberrant plumage or leucism, which appears to be at least as rare in gulls as in waders.

I should like to acknowledge the help received in correspondence and discussion from D. Beadle, P. J. Grant, R. Henson, I. P. Hodgson and F. Solly.

MARTIN P. SUTHERLAND

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REFERENCE

- INGOLFSSON, A. 1970. Hybridisation of Glaucous and Herring Gulls in Iceland. *Ibis* 112: 340-362.

Feeding behaviour of Black-headed Gull In August 1976, from a hide at the margins of a reservoir in Gwynedd, I observed and photographed at close quarters a Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* plunge-diving after small fish. This type of feeding, 'with submergence of the whole body, or all but tips of primaries', is mentioned as occasional in *The Handbook*, but subsequent discussion (*Brit. Birds* 36: 59, 118, 142, 183, 228) showed that it is not uncommon, although it has not apparently been photographed. The gull was feeding in a roughly circular pool about 100m in diameter and much of it less than 20cm deep, containing many small fish. The gull, in a distinctive stage of head moult, was present for at least five days, and appeared to regard the pool as its feeding territory, for it reacted aggressively to the arrival of other Black-headed Gulls (similar feeding territories are established by wintering Black-headed Gulls: see, for example, Widgery 1970). It usually fed by wading, moving forward slowly with its head held high and its body generally clear of the water, occasionally stabbing its head under the water. Periodically, perhaps when it reached water too deep for wading, it would take to the air and hover a metre or so above the surface for five to ten seconds (plates 31 & 32), before abruptly



31-33. Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* plunge-diving, Gwynedd, August 1976 (R. J. Chandler)



raising its wings above its back so that it dropped vertically with its lowered head and feet hitting the water together, its body being completely submerged in a shallow-plunge and only the ends of its raised wings remaining above water (plate 33). This feeding technique was frequently successful.

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Dr K. E. L. Simmons has commented as follows: 'This form of feeding is fairly common, I think, although the gull may more usually take a "header" at the last moment. It is a form of *plunge-diving*: after *hovering*, the gull performs a *surface-plunge* (incomplete submersion) or *shallow-plunge* (brief submersion). Also of interest is the temporary feeding territory.' Eds

REFERENCE

WIDGERY, J. 1970. Ringing controls and territorial feeding behaviour of Black-headed Gulls in Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens. *London Bird Rep.* 34: 88.

Tawny Owl taking atlas moth in flight J. R. Mather's observation of a Tawny Owl *Strix aluco* taking a juvenile Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* in flight (*Brit. Birds* 72: 552) recalled an incident some 15 years ago when, at dusk, I released an Edwards's atlas moth *Attacus edwardsii* which I had reared from the egg. It had a wingspan of about 21 cm. As soon as the moth had reached a height about level with the nearby tree tops, a Tawny Owl flew out and caught it in flight.

D. S. BUNN

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Wren caught on burdock Dr Stephanie J. Tyler's note on Mallards *Anas platyrhynchos* trapped by vegetation (*Brit. Birds* 72: 551) prompts me to record the following. On 22nd August 1975, at Westbury-sub-Mendip, Somerset, I found a dead Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* caught on the hooked bracts of burdock *Arctium*. It was hanging by its left foot, its toes caught on the hooks of one flower and its breast feathers caught on a flower head beneath. These flowers were near the top of the plant, about 130 cm from the ground. The Wren was outwardly in perfect condition.

DEREK J. SMITH

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Previous notes on passerines caught on burdock include Goldcrest *Regulus regulus* (*Brit. Birds* 51: 276) and Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* (*Brit. Birds* 54: 246), while, among other examples, brambles *Rubus* have been responsible for the deaths of Swallows *Hirundo rustica* (*Brit. Birds* 54: 362). Eds

Tail action of Dunnock Many authors refer to the unobtrusive nature of the foraging behaviour of the Dunnock *Prunella modularis*. On 17th November 1979, at Bailrigg, Lancashire, from a vantage point about 2 m directly overhead, I watched a Dunnock feeding, and I was afforded a possible explanation of the species' peculiarly mouse-like appearance when foraging. I noticed that with every forward hop it flicked open its tail until it was half spread (about twice its resting width); the tail was opened and closed in a split second and, when the same bird and a different individual were observed from a more horizontal vantage point, the effect of the combined lateral and forward motion was considerably to blur the tail. Thus, the outline of the bird would be difficult for a ground-dwelling

predator to define, whereas from above, on a gravel path, the tail action served only to make the Dunnock more noticeable. LAURENCE N. ROSE

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Dr David Snow has commented as follows: 'My wife and I have seen Dunnocks flicking their tail in this way, but think that it indicates some state of motivation with relation to other Dunnocks rather than that it is a special adaptation to confuse ground predators. Admittedly, I do not know exactly what it indicates, or in what behavioural context; one does not usually get an opportunity to see when a bird is or is not doing it.' EDS

Blackbird catching and briefly hoarding worms At 10.00 GMT on 29th September 1979, at my home in London, I saw a male Blackbird *Turdus merula* dig out three large earthworms (Lumbricidae) in about ten seconds, within a 30 cm² area of our lawn, leave them on the surface, and then eat them in quick succession.

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Derek Goodwin has commented as follows: 'Although this is not strictly hoarding, it is interesting that the Blackbird caught three worms in succession and then immediately ate them, suggesting that the hunting impulses (worms visible?) dominated. I have often noticed that, when worms are plentiful, Blackbirds will frequently apparently hunt when they are no longer hungry, pulling out a worm, leaving it, and finding and doing the same to other worms.' EDS

Identification of Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler The note by M. Densley (*Brit. Birds* 75: 133-134) prompts us to record the following.

We were present on Fair Isle on 21st September 1981 when PKG and J. M. Turton located a first-winter Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola* at Gilsetter. Initially, we obtained only very brief flight views as the warbler flew away at ground level up a narrow drainage channel where it appeared as a rather large *Locustella* with slim cigar-shaped body and rounded spatulate tail, the latter obvious even in flight. The plumage appeared very dark grey-brown, almost having an oily quality, with a distinct dark brick-red or rust tone to the rump and uppertail-coverts; indeed if it had not been for the unusual fact of a *Locustella* showing a rusty rump, the bird might have been dismissed as 'just another (dark) Grasshopper Warbler *L. naevia*'. The rump colour was not nearly so strikingly distinct in the hand. The supercilium, although rather well-defined clear-buff, was not so obvious on this first-winter individual as on Densley's spring adults, but the Fair Isle bird did show the grey collar or shawl on the lower nape and upper mantle. Dull whitish tips to the upperside of the tail feathers were not obvious in the field, but creamy white tips on the underside were more easy to see; the underparts were washed-out buff-yellow, stronger on the throat, with fine dark streaks to the upper breast, forming a vague gorget.

Notwithstanding this species' rarity status in Britain, we feel that Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler is perhaps one of the easiest *Locustella* warblers to identify due to the unique combination of tail-tipping, contrasting rusty rump and the supercilium. The species' secretive habits did, however, make the bird difficult to observe, even on scantily vegetated Fair Isle.

D. PAGE and P. K. GREAVES

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Supercilium of Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler I was interested to read M. Densley's note on the identification of Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola* (*Brit. Birds* 75: 133-134) in which he supported Alan Kitson's opinion (73: 398-399) that the presence of a supercilium as conspicuous as that of Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* is by far the easiest way to separate spring individuals of this species from others in its genus.

My experience is limited to only one bird, a first-winter on Fair Isle, Shetland, in September 1976 which (as can be seen in plate 34) showed

34. First-winter Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola*, Shetland, September 1976
(Andy Barber)



only a very indistinct, thin, creamy supercilium. It is possible that this individual belonged to a different race from those described by Densley and Kitson, or that the difference is age-related, but it is worth noting that, when attempting to identify a strange *Locustella*, the possibility of Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler should not necessarily be ruled out by the lack of a prominent supercilium.

S. J. BROYD

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Spotted Flycatcher using nest of House Martin On 23rd June 1979, at Bilton in Ainsty, York, North Yorkshire, a Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* was seen to leave an old nest of a House Martin *Delichon urbica* in a small colony of about ten pairs of martins. The nest, 5½m above the ground, had a sparse lining of grass and sheep's wool, and contained four flycatcher's eggs. It was built in 1974, and re-used in 1975 and 1978; during the winter of 1978-79, the entrance had become enlarged. All four eggs hatched, and the young flew about 25th July. Since 1973, Spotted Flycatchers have nested regularly in the vicinity, using conventional sites.

R. WARD-SMITH and B. NATTRESS

Bilton Grove Farm, Bilton in Ainsty, York, North Yorkshire

Bruce Campbell and James Ferguson-Lees (1974, *A Field Guide to Birds' Nests*) noted Spotted Flycatchers nesting occasionally 'in old nests of other species, particularly thrushes [*Turdus*], but even in Greenfinch [*Carduelis chloris*]'. EDS

Twites wintering in Midland England The winter distribution of the Twite *Carduelis flavirostris* in England is predominantly along the east coast. Since at least 1948, a regular flock has occurred at Chasewater, Staffordshire/West Midlands. Until 1953, up to 15 were recorded; in 1954, 31; and subsequently from six to 50, until a sudden increase to 80 in 1967 and 90 in 1968. They were always elusive, but favoured sites included overgrown heaps of mining spoil and old railway embankments. In the late 1960s, they were often found on a flat pan of black coal slurry which had an increasing coverage of seed-bearing plants such as annual wall-rocket *Diplotaxis muralis*, colt's-foot *Tussilago farfara*, weld *Reseda luteola* and wild mignonette *R. lutea*, with hawkweed *Hieracium*, creeping thistle *Cirsium arvense*, mugwort *Artemisia vulgaris* and wormwood *A. absinthium* on surrounding banks. In 1971/72, 95 Twites was the maximum; in late 1973, 90; and, in early 1977, 70; with smaller numbers in other winters. The habitat was then destroyed, and the Twites became even less regular, but a nearby field with a dense growth of mugwort and wormwood proved attractive: possibly over 100 Twites were occasionally seen, with 60 in early 1980. Throughout the 1970s, erosion of the shoreline and embankment habitat used at times by the Twites continued intermittently, yet the traditional flock survived. The transformation of largely overgrown 'waste' ground into 'reclaimed' areas of short, mown grass has, however, greatly reduced the variety of vegetation, insect and bird life, and the future of the Twite flock is very uncertain.

R. A. HUME

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Letters

Sabine's Gulls in Britain in winter Recent issues of *British Birds* have included two references to Sabine's Gulls *Larus sabini* being recorded in Britain during the winter, from December to March. The first, in 'Recent reports' (*Brit. Birds* 74: 237), referred to Sabine's as a 'northern gull' and cited two January records, one from Merseyside and the other from Suffolk. The second reference (*Brit. Birds* 74: 423) stated: 'No less than 28 occurred in movements of up to seven individuals, with a high incidence of on-shore winds between December and March in winter 1978/79.' I believe that these and other winter reports of this species from Britain are open to question.

While this species could be thought of as a 'northern gull' when considering its breeding range, it could hardly be judged such during the winter. While the winter range of this species is not yet known with precision, the evidence suggests that it is off the coast of southwestern Africa and off the west coasts of Central and South America. The species is largely if not completely absent from the temperate waters of the northern hemisphere. In Britain, this species is a rare transient, especially after westerly storms in the autumn, when the great majority are juveniles. There are also a number of midwinter reports. Yet, when one assesses the plethora of sightings in Britain and northern Europe which are supported by photographs, specimens or many observers, *none* is between December and March. The majority of the fully documented records are for September and October. If the 28 reported from *one* headland during *one* winter is a correct indication of the numbers present off Britain during the winter, then surely over the years there would have eventually been a winter record supported by photographs or specimen from somewhere in Britain or Europe?

Perhaps further questions can be raised about these winter records, when one considers the status of Sabine's Gull off California. Here, it can be a common spring and autumn transient, with single-day counts sometimes numbering in the hundreds of individuals. Yet, despite this abundance as a migrant, there are only two reports between mid December and mid April (validity of these reports not assessed here). Since this species is so much more numerous off California than off Britain as a migrant, it seems odd that it is so much rarer (essentially unknown) during the winter, especially so when considering that the relatively warmer waters off California are geographically nearer to the closest region where this species regularly winters.

With all this in mind, I think there is a legitimate basis for questioning the winter records of this species from Britain. This is not to state, of course, that all such records are certain misidentifications, but I think there is reason to suggest that there is a great need to document carefully any future midwinter sightings.

JON DUNN

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Field identification of Long-eared and Short-eared Owls I should like to draw the attention of *British Birds* readers to an identification feature noted in 1980 by J. Haapala and M. Lammin-Soila in their excellent identification paper on Long-eared *Asio otus* and Short-eared Owls *A. flammeus* (*Tringa* 7: 78-84) but which is not stressed in other papers.

Short-eared Owl has tips of the three to four outer primaries black with about four small 'mirrors'. The outer primaries of the Long-eared Owl, however, are pale grey with three to five dark crossed stripes, the wingtip never looking wholly black (see fig. 1 and also photographs in *Brit. Birds* 75: 72-74).



Fig. 1. Wingtip (underwing) patterns of Short-eared *Asio otus* (left) and Long-eared Owls *A. flammeus* (right) (drawn by M. Lammin-Soila)

The colour of the wingtip is clearly visible on both the underwing and the upperwing, and is the best way to separate these two species in flight, even at long range.

HANNU JÄNNES

Juhani Ahon tie 16 A, 00150 Hki 15, Helsinki, Finland

This identification feature is indeed unstressed in the British literature, but was very well illustrated by Hermann Heinzel in *The Birds of Britain and Europe with North Africa and the Middle East* (1972) and by Peter Hayman in *Birdlife in Britain* (1976). Eds

Characteristics of Plain Willow Warbler I believe that Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, in his interesting discussion of the identification of the Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli* shown in 'Mystery photograph 67' (*Brit. Birds* 75: 318-320) may have unwittingly confused readers with regard to identification of Plain Willow Warbler *P. neglectus*. In the second paragraph, he stated that 'The elongated shape . . . and absence of any wing-bar immediately eliminates all thoughts of Pallas's *P. proregulus*, Yellow-browed *P. inornatus* or Plain Willow Warblers *P. neglectus*.' Contrary to this inference, Plain Willow Warbler (as its name suggests) does not display a wing-bar, one feature which facilitates its separation, particularly from other small members of its genus such as the eastern race of the Yellow-browed Warbler *P. i. humeii*.

ROBIN JOLLIFFE

18 Westhawe, Bretton, Peterborough

Dr J. T. R. Sharrock has replied: 'Robin Jolliffe is right to pull me up. I was eliminating Plain Willow Warbler (which I do not know in the field) on its size and shape (Goldcrest-sized and short-tailed) rather than the absence/presence of a wing-bar, but the sentence did not make this clear.' S. C. Madge, who has trapped as well as watched this species, has commented: 'In the field, Plain Willow Warbler is a veritable miniature *tristis* Chiffchaff *P. collybita*; the tail, however, is relatively much shorter and the supercilium weaker. I first came across this species in 1970 on mountain slopes covered with juniper *Juniperus* in central Afghanistan, where it was not uncommon, although rather skulking by nature. It proclaimed its presence by its brief, low, harsh 'churr'; this call is totally different from that of any other *Phylloscopus*. It is the only member of the genus to have its breeding range centred in the Irano-Afghan region of the Palearctic and is, consequently, one of the least known. Being only a relatively short-distance migrant, it is highly unlikely to turn up anywhere near western Europe' Eds

Observers names in 'Rarities report' I think it is time for us all to consider exactly where birdwatching is heading.

Some newcomers to birdwatching, who are immediately concerned with rarities, seem intent on getting their names into the annual 'Report on rare birds in Great Britain', whatever the cost to birds or to their fellow bird-watchers.

I suggest that a positive move, to take some of the heat out of the situation, would be to drop the naming of the finders and describers of rarities from the 'Rarities report'. There seems to be no scientific reason for their inclusion. I believe that there would be a good deal of support for this measure.

G. P. SUTTON

The Old Orchard, Lynstone, Bude, Cornwall

The members of the Rarities Committee will be discussing this proposal at their next annual general meeting, on 12th March 1983. Readers' views will be taken into consideration: please write to P. J. Grant, 14 Heathfield Road, Ashford, Kent TN24 8QD. Eds

Announcements

Irish Rare Breeding Birds Panel At a meeting held in Dublin on 27th November 1982, an Irish Rare Breeding Birds Panel was formed, to collect all records of rare breeding birds in the Republic of Ireland. Those attending this meeting were Dr David Cabot, John Davies, J. E. Fitzharris, S. Fleming, J. Foley, Kieran Grace, Dr J. P. Hillis, C. D. Hutchinson, O. J. Merne, Killian Mullarney, Richard Nairn, K. Preston and Dr J. T. R. Sharrock. Written comments and approval had also been supplied by F. King, W. J. O'Flynn, Major R. F. Rutledge, David Scott and J. Temple Lang, who were unable to attend the meeting. Those present unanimously elected John Davies (Secretary), Oscar Merne, Ken Preston and Ralph Sheppard to membership of the four-man Panel. The Panel is an independent, autonomous body, but will liaise and co-operate with the Irish Wildbird Conservancy.

The aims and methods of the Panel will be broadly similar to those of the Rare Breeding Birds Panel which covers Britain and Northern Ireland (*Brit. Birds* 66: 172-174; 68: 5-23). It will collect in one place all information on rare breeding birds in the Republic of Ireland so that changes in status can be monitored and breeding records are not lost. Data sent to the Panel will not be divulged to any other person (not even to members of Council or staff of the IWC) without the written permission of the person supplying the information (during their lifetime), except that an annual summary in general terms will be included in the 'Irish Bird Report' published in *Irish Birds*. Localities will never be mentioned unless all concerned consider it safe to do so, and often the county (and sometimes the region) will be omitted. In certain circumstances, the Panel may decide not to publish a record at all because of the security risk. Since the naming of an observer could be a clue to a species' locality, contributors' names will be omitted.

People having relevant information are asked to submit breeding records of the species listed below on the Panel's special forms. These will be

obtainable free on request from the Secretary, and should be returned to him. The Panel is particularly interested in breeding records during the last ten years, 1973-82, for a review of the changes in rare breeding birds in Ireland since the end of the *Atlas* fieldwork in 1972. Only two copies of the original record supplied to the Panel will exist and will be kept secure at different locations. Normally, these records will be consulted only by the Secretary, but a summary will be shown to other members of the Panel at meetings.

**List of species for which records for 1973 onwards are required by the Irish
Rare Breeding Birds Panel**

This list is confined to species which have bred in Ireland during the last 15 years (i.e. since the beginning of *Atlas* fieldwork in 1968)

Red-throated Diver <i>Gavia stellata</i>	Greenshank <i>Tringa nebularia</i>
Leach's Petrel <i>Oceanodroma leucorhoa</i>	Red-necked Phalarope <i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>
Whooper Swan <i>Cygnus cygnus</i>	Black Tern <i>Chlidonias niger</i>
Gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i>	Turtle Dove <i>Streptopelia turtur</i>
Pintail <i>A. acuta</i>	Short-eared Owl <i>Asio flammeus</i>
Garganey <i>A. querquedula</i>	Nightjar <i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>
Pochard <i>Aythya ferina</i>	Yellow Wagtail <i>Motacilla flava</i>
Common Scoter <i>Melanitta nigra</i>	Redstart <i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>
Goosander <i>Mergus merganser</i>	Ring Ouzel <i>Turdus torquatus</i>
Marsh Harrier <i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	Reed Warbler <i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>
Montagu's Harrier <i>C. pygargus</i>	Wood Warbler <i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>
Buzzard <i>Buteo buteo</i>	Bearded Tit <i>Panurus biarmicus</i>
Quail <i>Coturnix coturnix</i>	Crossbill <i>Loxia curvirostra</i>
Dotterel <i>Charadrius morinellus</i>	Corn Bunting <i>Miliaria calandra</i>

All correspondence should be with the IRBBP Secretary, John Davies, 5 Mountain Villa, Ballybrack, Co. Dublin, Ireland.

Young Ornithologists of the Year As usual, this competition was run by the Young Ornithologists' Club and sponsored by *British Birds*. The 1982 entries were judged by Peter Holden and Dr J. T. R. Sharrock on 10th December. As well as answering some questions to test their general ornithological knowledge, entrants had to submit field notebooks covering six months of birdwatching. This was clearly attractive to those in the senior age group, for there were many more entries than in previous years.

The winners were as follows:

SENIOR (13-16 years old)	1st Adam Rowlands (Rainham, Kent)
	2nd Alan Lewis (Congleton, Cheshire)
	3rd Robert Dawson (Leeds, West Yorkshire)
INTERMEDIATE (10-12 years old)	1st Shona Glover (Northwood, Middlesex)
	2nd Rowena Wade (Studley, Warwickshire)
	3rd David Broome (Wigan, Lancashire)
JUNIOR (5-9 years old)	— (No first prize awarded)
	2nd Bronagh Finnegan (Newry, Co. Down)
	3rd Daniel Parkin (Newcastle-upon-Tyne)



The judges considered that none of the entries in the junior age-group quite merited the award of the first prize. In the excellent senior section, Alan Lewis was a very close second. The two winners, Adam Rowlands (14) and special award ceremony at The Lodge.

Free 'Birds New to . . .' badge The new BB-Poyser book *Birds New to Britain and Ireland*, by J. T. R. Sharrock and P. J. Grant, is featured on a button badge which will be sent free to any BB subscriber who sends a SAE to P. J. Grant, 14 Heathfield Road, Ashford, Kent TN24 8QD.



The fifth 'Lars Jonsson' Croom Helm Ltd has now published the fifth and last in the series of identification guides to the birds of Europe by Lars Jonsson, the young, highly praised, Swedish birder/artist. Those who already own the first four volumes will obviously wish to complete their sets. This fifth volume, however, is worth having on its own, as it covers all the south European specialities, as suggested by its title, *Birds of the Mediterranean and Alps*; the illustrations are superb. It is obtainable post free from *British Birds* (see page ix) at £5.95.

Reduced rate subscriptions for RAFOS Members of the Royal Air Force Ornithological Society are now entitled to claim the reduced rate (£15 instead of £20) for BB subscriptions with UK or BFPO addresses.

News and comment

Mike Everett and Robin Prytherch

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

Cape Clear news It is good news for Irish ornithology that Tim Collins, who has had a very successful spell as Warden at Cape Clear Bird Observatory in autumn 1982, will be returning for spring and autumn 1983. Four courses will be run at the Observatory in 1983, one in the last week of May and three, probably including one on mammal and marine biology, during 3rd-24th July. The early-autumn courses will be followed by two weeks of Storm Petrel ringing. Anyone interested should contact Clive Hutchinson, 11 Knockrea Park, Douglas Road, Cork, Ireland. In passing, we must note that 1982 also saw a record American autumn (or fall!) at Cape Clear, with Bobolink *Dolichonyx oryzivorus*, Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus*, Yellow-rumped Warbler *Dendroica coronata*, Grey-checked Thrush *Catharus*

minimus and Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata* on this 640-ha island.

Peterson, Mountfort and Hollom The legendary trio responsible for the famous 'Field Guide' will be getting together again for a rare appearance: at the RSPB Members' Weekend at the University of Warwick, on Saturday 16th April 1983. RTP—surely one of the world's most influential living birdwatchers—will top the bill with the Saturday evening lecture. Two other Peterson lectures are to be arranged for other venues later. Guy Mountfort will be speaking at the Weekend too, and Phil Hollom will be joining in for a chat and book-signing session. Complete details from RSPB Conference Organiser, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL: early booking recommended!

International identification meetings

International discussion of identification

topics and national rarities committee procedures has been the purpose of two recent



35. International identification meeting, Elat, Israel, October-November 1981. Left to right: Gerald Oreel (Netherlands), Killian Mullarney (Republic of Ireland), Jon Dunn (USA), Bill Oddie, Tim Sharrock, Peter Grant, David Fisher and Richard Porter (UK), Hadoram Shirihaï (Israel), and Paul Herroelen (Belgium) (*Killian Mullarney*)



36. International identification meeting, Falsterbo, Sweden, August-September 1982. Standing, left to right: Steen Christensen (Denmark), Jan Ohlsson, Lars Jonsson, Stellan Hedgren and Göran Walinder (Sweden), and Killian Mullarney (Republic of Ireland); seated, left to right: Per Alström and Lars Svensson (Sweden), Peter Grant (UK), and Lasse Laine (Finland) (*Killian Mullarney*)

informal meetings, at Elat, Israel, during 30th October to 4th November 1981, and at Falsterbo, Sweden, during 28th August to 5th September 1982. Invited delegates are all involved with their national ornithological journals or are members of their national rarities committees. The meetings are proving to be very beneficial in promoting a more widely-based—and thus more comprehensive and substantial—approach to identification and related problems. (*Contributed by PJG*)

Woodpecker symposium A symposium on the ecology and conservation of the Middle Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos medius* will take place on 5th-6th March 1983 in Zürich, Switzerland. The species has become endangered in many parts of northern and central Europe as a result of habitat deterioration. The symposium—arranged by the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Uppsala, the University of Zürich, and the Ornithological Society of Zürich—is open to all ornithologists and forest and nature conservation administrators interested in the topic. Full details from Börje Pettersson, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Department of Wildlife Ecology, S-750 07 Uppsala, Sweden.

Cri de cœur The latest, and excellent, *Cheshire Bird Report* (for 1981) includes an editorial by Jonathan P. Guest, his last as county recorder. It would have been easy for him to have penned platitudes, but a small selection of quotes will demonstrate the aspects of county society recording which have left their mark on Mr Guest and which must all, to varying extents, be relevant to other British ornithological societies. 'Many Cheshire birdwatchers including a majority of the local societies are neglecting their home county in favour of the coach-trips or "twitching" forays to far-flung corners of Britain. . . . Are we not losing sight of reality when the likes of Pectoral Sandpiper and Glaucous Gull . . . are not considered worth a description in the watcher's notebook? . . . Scarcely a murmur is raised at the loss of Elton Hall Flash at Sandbach because of silting, or when Danes Moss falls victim to our insatiable demand for sites to dump rubbish. Several of the sand quarries currently being excavated around the county show enormous potential as bird-reserves, but will doubtless be snapped up by the better prepared water sports and angling bodies. There is a desperate need for a unified voice to represent the interests of bird-

watchers in Cheshire. We are not consciously burning our boats, but rather letting them rot away through lack of care . . . I have found a number of the constituent societies of the COA [Cheshire Ornithological Association] unwilling or unable to co-operate on recording matters, and yet these same societies wish to have a say in the running of the report. The conscientious efforts of the few individuals who keep things moving are doubly appreciated in the light of my dissatisfaction. . . . The quality of future reports is in your hands.'

We suspect that these words may reflect the emotions of many county recorders, report editors and conservation officers. (*Contributed by JTRS*)

Recent breeding survey results The *Hampshire Bird Report* for 1981 includes some interesting population figures: 189 pairs of Sandwich Terns *Sterna sandvicensis* bred with good success; 245 or more pairs of Common *S. hirundo* and 173-180 pairs of Little Terns *S. albigrons* also nested. Most thought-provoking, perhaps, are estimated totals of 350-400 pairs of Nightjars *Caprimulgus europaeus*, over 200 pairs of Woodlarks *Lullula arborea*, and less than 500 pairs of Wood Warblers *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* (over 400 of these in the New Forest), while for Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* a 'total New Forest population well into four figures' is given. Unfortunately, no work was carried out on Hobbies *Falco subbuteo* or Stone-curlews *Burhinus oedipnemus*. What a pity, too, that again there is not even a bald summary of Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus* numbers, although the Rare Breeding Birds Panel hopes to receive data on some aspects of the New Forest population of this interesting raptor in due course. The report is available, price £2 (post free), from HOS, Beechwell Cottage, Bartley, near Southampton, Hampshire. (*Contributed by DAC*)

SOC Conference The 35th Annual Conference of the Scottish Ornithologists' Club was held at North Berwick during 5th-7th November 1982. The theme for Saturday was feeding habits and ecology, and after Dr Ivan Draper, who presided magnificently throughout, had opened, Dr David Houston told us many things about vultures that we previously thought we knew, but found that we didn't, in his modestly entitled 'The role of vultures as scavengers'. Bernard Zonfrillo's lecture ('Feeding ecology of the petrels') kept us spellbound as he demonstrated how plastic wire, polystyrene beads

and grapes appeared to form a major part of the diet of Scottish Fulmars and petrels: he could have talked for much longer without losing our interest. Chris Mead then explained how birds' feeding habits are affected in winter, not just by the severity of the weather, but especially by the amount of glazing, and then taught us what to do with empty 'Coke' bottles (to the benefit of tits, that is!).

The Saturday evening dinner was a pleasure for all, and Mike Scott contrived to mix modern 'pop' with Scottish traditional in his role as disco DJ. Sunday opened with news of current Scottish work: talks by Iain Gibson on Yellow Wagtails (apparently Iain had trouble with females in east Scotland!), and by Dr Mick Marquiss on herons, a change for him from his major raptor studies. Up-to-date news of Scottish reserves was given by John Hunt and Bernard Gilchrist. The closing lecture was by John Burton, on 'Some aspects of bird sounds', a mammoth subject that raised as many problems as it solved for the birdwatcher trying to get to grips with some of the stranger sounds of nature.

In the *BB* mystery photograph competition, a Corn Bunting in unlikely habitat caused more problems than did either a Bluthroat at its nest or a Willow Tit. Of the 38 who felt confident enough to enter, 12 got all five identifications correct. Dr Edmund C. Fellowes's name was drawn as the winner, and he was presented with his bottle of champagne by Mrs Carmelia Christie. (*Contributed by DAC*)

Another winter atlas We hear from Dr Karel Štastný that a winter atlas project, using the same methods as those currently employed in Britain and Ireland, has started in Czechoslovakia this winter. The very good coverage achieved in the Czechoslovakian breeding bird atlas bodes well for another successful project.

Publications round-up A number of interesting recent publications deserve mention: the second edition of the late Eddie Watkinson's *A Guide to Bird-watching in Mallorca*, available from J. G. Sanders, PO Box 24, Alderney, Channel Islands, £3 (incl. p & p); the Young Ornithologists' Club's *Spring Migration Phone-in Report, 1982*, from YOC, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL, 75p (incl. p & p); *Birds around Milton Keynes*, published by the North Bucks RSPB Members' Group, from A. Edwardes, 1 Priory

Close, Newport Pagnell, Buckinghamshire MK16 9AQ, £1 (incl. p & p); and *Greenland White-fronted Goose Study*, the report of the 1979 expedition by the biologists of the University College of Wales to Eqaungmiut Nunât, West Greenland, from the School of Biological Sciences, UCW, Aberystwyth, Dyfed, £8 (plus £1.20 p & p). Last, but not least, we welcome the appearance of *The Living Bird Quarterly*, which has replaced the well-known organ of the Cornell University Laboratory of Ornithology, *The Living Bird*: more details from the lab., at Sapsucker Woods, Ithaca, NY 14850, USA.

Scilly Trails and Hide Fund (STAHF)

Birding visitors to Scilly will be pleased to learn that they can now contribute directly towards the provision and upkeep of trails and hides on St Mary's and soon, it is hoped, on other islands. This work is at present carried out by the NCC, but very much more could be done if extra funds were available. Present priorities are a wader scrape and new hide in Lower Moors, St Mary's; laying stone and boardwalks on the existing—and often very muddy—trails; erecting a new hide overlooking previously inaccessible parts of Tresco Great Pool; and improving the viewing facilities at the seaward end of Porth Hellick Pool, St Mary's. Advice and opinions on priorities and future projects will be sought from Scilly birding regulars by the chairman, secretary and treasurer of the newly formed fund, who are respectively: Ray Lawman (NCC Warden for the Lizard & Scilly), Mike Rogers (well-known Scilly aficionado and secretary of the *BB* Rarities Committee) and David Hunt (Scilly resident naturalist). It is hoped that all past and future visitors to Scilly will wish to contribute generously towards the fund, and that they will soon be able to appreciate the results! Cheques should be made payable to 'Scilly Trails & Hide Fund' and sent to David Hunt (STAHF), Porthcressa, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly. To save postal costs and administrative work, donations will not be acknowledged except through donors' bank statements. (*Contributed by PJG*)

Collective names Rob Hume has suggested a few more of these: how about a CONFLAGRATION of Firecrests; a REJECTION of Great Snipes; a CONVERSATION of chats; a CHOICE of Eider (groan . . .); a SWEEP of Sooties; and a STRING of rarities? Actually, Rob, we are sorely tempted to put forward 'A SHIPLOAD of Lark Sparrows', but that's another story!

Recent reports

K. Allsopp and R. A. Hume

These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records

All dates refer to November unless stated otherwise.

During the first week, high pressure nearby on the Continent blocked the passage of Atlantic depressions, with resultant warm southerly winds. The high then declined, and westerly winds dominated, changing to colder northwesterlies on 13th. These colder, wet westerlies persisted until the end of the month.

The 'Yanks' keep coming . . .

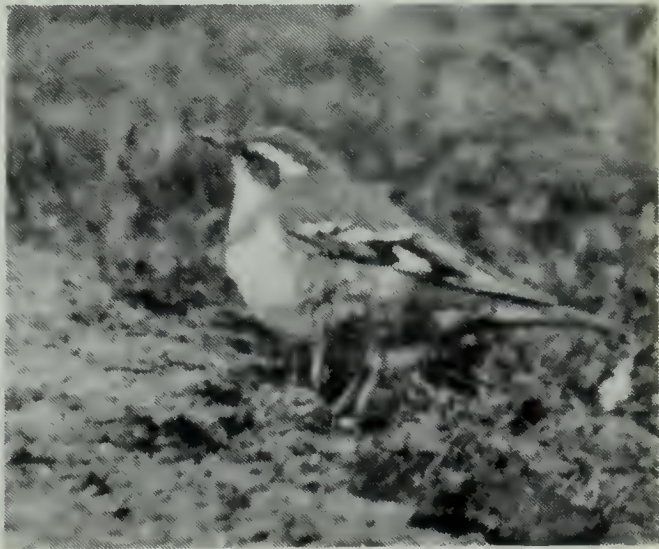
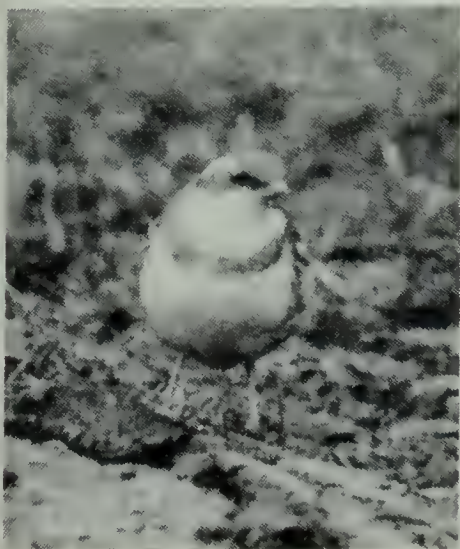
After a gap of 14 years, two **American Redstarts** *Setophaga ruticilla* were found: one on Islay (Strathclyde), followed a few days later by another at the normally rarity-starved Gibraltar Point (Lincolnshire); the latter, which appeared on 7th, stayed long enough for hundreds to see this exceptionally beautiful bird. Not so lucky was a **Parula Warbler** *Parula americana* found dead at Wigan (Greater Manchester) on 10th. Then to round off the incredible set of autumn Nearctic passerine records was the discovery of a **Varied Thrush** *Zoothera naevia* at Nanquidno (Cornwall) on 9th (plates 37-39). This bird of the Canadian Rockies normally travels south only to the western United States: an unlikely candidate to cross the Atlantic?

37-39. Varied Thrush *Zoothera naevia*. Cornwall, November 1982 (*S. C. Hutchings*)

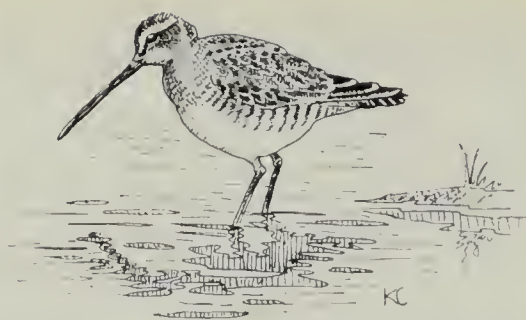


. . . and so do Eurasian vagrants

A **Radde's Warbler** *Phylloscopus schwarzi*, Ireland's first, was found at Hook Head (Co. Wexford) on 6th, with another on the same day at Holkham (Norfolk). Late records of **Yellow-browed Warblers** *P. inornatus* came from the Old Head of Kinsale (Co. Cork) on 7th, Walney (Cumbria) on 8th and 9th, and inland at Cheadle Hulme (Cheshire) on 9th



and 10th. Exceptionally late migrants were an **Icterine Warbler** *Hippolais icterina* at Dalkey (Co. Dublin) on 20th, a **Pied Flycatcher** *Ficedula hypoleuca* at Landguard Point (Suffolk) on 7th and a **Scarlet Rosefinch** *Carpodacus erythrinus* on the Old Head of Kinsale on 6th. Arrivals of normal winter visitors were not reported in any large numbers. A few **Great Grey Shrikes** *Lanius excubitor* were seen, but an **Isabelline Shrike** *L. isabellinus* received most attention at Anderby Creek (Lincolnshire) on 7th and 8th. The



(Surrey), and a **Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* was seen at Stithians Reservoir (Cornwall) from 12th to 20th. A 'second' for the British list was a **Green Heron** *Butorides striatus* found on 27th at Stone Creek (Humberside) (plates 40 & 41), where it had joined a **Great White Egret** *Egretta alba* discovered earlier, on 21st; both were considered to show the characters of Nearctic subspecies. An **American Bittern** *Botaurus lentiginosus* was found, unfortunately dead, in Co. Sligo on 25th.

... and other wading birds

European vagrant species included a flock of 17 **Cranes** *Grus grus* on the Isle of Sheppey (Kent) from 10th to 13th, a **White Stork** *Ciconia ciconia* in northeast Suffolk, **Spoonbills** *Platalea leucorodia* at Landguard Point on 13th and Minsmere (Suffolk) on 14th, and a **Grey Phalarope** *Phalaropus fulicarius* driven inland to Saddington Reservoir (Leicestershire) on 7th.

flock of reported **Parrot Crossbills** *Loxia pytyopsittacus* at Howden Reservoir (South Yorkshire/Derbyshire) left many observers bewildered by the varied sizes of bills and bodies, and more sympathetic to taxonomists' problems. A few **Waxwings** *Bombycilla garrulus* were seen in East Anglia, and one at Walney on 26th. Other notable records were a **Rose-coloured Starling** *Sturnus roseus* at Portavogie (Co. Down) on 28th, a **Serin** *Serinus serinus* at Gibraltar Point on 13th, and a **Richard's Pipit** *Anthus novaeseelandiae* throughout the month at East Runton (Norfolk). From the nearby Continent, ten **Fan-tailed Warblers** *Cisticola juncidis* were seen near Calais (France) on 5th ... so look out!

Yet more 'Yanks' ...

The controversial but instructive sandpiper at Felixstowe (Suffolk) reported last month (and staying into December) was considered by most to be a **Western** *Calidris mauri*, but doubts remain. Another bird which stayed throughout the month was the **Baird's Sandpiper** *C. bairdii* at Staines Reservoir





40 & 41. Green Heron *Butorides striatus*, Humberside, November 1982 (P. A. Doherty)



42. Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*, Buckinghamshire, November 1982 (S. G. D. Cook)





Wildfowl and raptors

The most impressive reports were of the arrival of the **Brent Geese** *Branta bernicla* along the East Anglian coast on 5th and 6th, when some 30,000 were seen flying south along the shoreline. Spotted among these was a **Red-breasted Goose** *B. ruficollis* at Winterton (Norfolk) on 5th. **Red-crested Pochards** *Netta rufina* made their usual appearance at Abberton Reservoir (Essex), with two present by late November, and another was reported at Rutland Water (Leicestershire) from 13th to 27th. A **Surf Scoter** *Melanitta perspicillata* at Redcar and a 'Green-winged' **Teal** *Anas crecca* at Minsmere on 14th to 24th were the only reported Americans. Notable inland records included three **Eiders** *Somateria mollissima* and two **Long-tailed Ducks** *Clangula hyemalis* at Ashworth Moor Reservoir (Greater Manchester) on 6th. Birds-of-prey records were few, with only a handful of **Rough-legged**

Buzzards *Buteo lagopus* seen, mainly in the coastal area of Suffolk, and **Red Kites** *Milvus milvus* at Strumpshaw (Norfolk) on 7th and at Woodbridge (Suffolk) on 13th.

Five star petrels

Once more, St Ives (Cornwall) provided the star performers: this time **Madeiran Petrels** *Oceanodroma castro*, with singles on 14th and 15th, and a further two on 22nd. The other star was a **Wilson's Petrel** *Oceanites oceanicus* seen following a ship into Bristol (Avon) on 19th.

Some interesting skua movements were reported: six **Pomarinus** *Stercorarius pomarinus* were seen at Hopes Nose (Devon) on 6th, together with two **Long-tailed** *S. longicaudus*; other **Pomarinus** found included one inland, at Willen Lake (Buckinghamshire) from 13th (plate 42), where it was observed killing and devouring a Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*, and another at Walney from 14th to 19th. After one **South Polar Skua** *S. maccormicki*, reported last month, St Ives observers had a second, on 18th October, only four days after the first. Now that people are looking . . .

Nearctic seabirds featured were a **Forster's Tern** *Sterna forsteri* in Dublin Bay from 21st, and **Ring-billed Gulls** *Larus delawarensis*, with two at Radipole Lake (Dorset) on 12th, and one inland at Staines Reservoir on 28th. Concentrations of **Little Gulls** *L. minutus* were counted at Minsmere, with 85 on 5th, and at Landguard Point, where there



were 105 on 6th. Storm-blown **Little Auks** *Alle alle* were found in the west, with several reported on the Irish south coast late in the month, two at Walney on 29th, and one inland at Cheddar Reservoir (Somerset) on 20th.



Latest news

During the first half of January, Nearctic vagrants included a **Killdeer** *Charadrius vociferus* at Bo'ness, near Edinburgh (Central); an **American Wigeon** *Anas americana* in Northamptonshire; and a **Laughing Gull** *Larus atricilla* in southwest Scotland. There was also a **Two-barred Crossbill** *Loxia leucoptera* in Derbyshire; a **Ross's Gull** *Rhodostethia rosea* at Southport (Merseyside) on 17th; two **Lesser Whitefronted Geese** *Anser erythropus* at Slimbridge (Gloucestershire); and a **Rough-legged Buzzard** *Buteo lagopus* in Bedfordshire.

Reviews

Bird Migration in Africa: movements between six continents. By Kai Curry-Lindahl. Academic Press, 1981. 2 vols. lxxxix + 695 pages; many text maps; 32 monochrome plates. Vol. 1, £41.40; vol. 2, £20.60.

A price which is unusually high, coupled with the reputation of the publishing house, suggests that here is something rather special. Indeed, with a distinguished author, and a statement in the preface that the draft outline was prepared as long ago as 1961, I expected a major work. In the event, I found it grandiose rather than grand, seriously out of date (the manuscript was apparently completed in 1977) and very uneven in its treatment.

In his preface, the author writes 'It was indeed pretentious to attempt writing another book on bird migration in Africa so soon after Moreau's last book was published. That I humbly tried to do so was not only motivated by my contractual commitment, but also by the fact that there are subject areas which were either not touched upon by Moreau or were left incomplete.' Later he comments 'Particularly important in this respect are the two masterly major works by R. E. Moreau: "Bird Faunas of Africa and its Islands" (1966) and "Palearctic-African Bird Migration Systems" (1972) which stand out as two synthesising pillars of knowledge.' How true an assessment, and how sad that his own work offers so little that is new, whether of fact or of synthesis. Despite a bibliography of over 30 pages, the work appears to lean heavily on the contributions of a relatively small number of authors such as Ash, Elgood, Fry, Morel and—time and again—Moreau. The outstandingly interesting discoveries by Backhurst, Pearson and colleagues of mid-winter movements at Ngulia in the Tsavo national park are given most of a chapter, and rightly so. But, with few exceptions, such as his detailed work on Yellow Wagtails, the author's own fieldwork as recorded in these volumes might more appropriately have appeared under a more modest heading of the type 'A contribution to the ornithology of...'

Tables and maps form the core of the work. Chapter 4, 'Eurasian (chiefly Palearctic) migrants to Africa' runs to about 160 pages and comprises a massive summary table and maps depicting the breeding-season and winter ranges in Africa for most species. Some of the maps carry arrows. On some maps the arrows indicate migration routes; on others they suggest the general direction of movement. It is often difficult to distinguish the two functions. Do Honey Buzzards really cross the Sahara anywhere along its enormous east-west frontage, with no concentration at either end of the Mediterranean? The tabular text, although headed 'Southernmost wintering area or occasional records', generally expresses in words what is depicted in the maps. Chapter 5—some 20 pages—is devoted mainly to a timetable for migration, with the five column headings 'Species', 'Departure from or passage through Zaire', 'Departure from other areas of Africa', 'Arrival in Sweden' and 'Departure from Sweden'. Chapter 8, which occupies some 200 pages, tabulates with some maps what is known of African migrants within Africa. Here the column headings are 'Species', 'Breeding area', 'Period in breeding area', 'Non-breeding area', 'Period in non-breeding area' and 'Remarks'. There are so many gaps, in so many of the columns, that one wonders whether this extravagant way of pointing the need for further research is really justified.

The slimmer second volume includes a number of discussion chapters, some of which disappoint because there is apparently so little yet to tell; and then there are more tables. 'Habitats of Palearctic migrants in Africa which do not breed regularly in the tropics' occupies about 20 pages: I could have done with more. The Whitethroat habitat in Africa is summarised as 'Hillside scrub, habitats with scattered shrubs, bush and woodland savannas and thornbush steppe indicate a preference for rather dry and open country. Exists also, but rarely, in habitats with more lush vegetation, even in glades of the lowland rain-forest (Zaire). Some habitats are shared with the preceding species [Lesser Whitethroat].' The table 'Behavioural characteristics of Eurasian migrants in their African winter quarters', occupying a dozen pages, is very uneven in its treatment. For example, the Yellow Wagtail gets 120 words, while the Wheatear receives about average treatment, thus 'On migration in northern Africa the species may often congregate in flocks of up to several hundred individuals on favourable feeding sites, but elsewhere it is solitary and territorial.' Of the Whitethroat, all that is written is 'Sings occasionally'.

Table XIII, 'Examples of interspecific relations', seems potentially interesting and useful, but perhaps fails to justify the ten pages it occupies. For example, the entry for Tawny Pipit reads 'Found in the same habitat as the dark plain-backed pipit (*A. leucophrys*), and for the House Martin 'Has been regularly observed in the Kenya highlands feeding in the same air strata as Swifts (Moreau 1972).' The Yellow Wagtail is awarded a full column-length of text ending 'Association with reptiles may be exemplified by feeding close beside resting Nile crocodiles or perching on the top of a bush where a sand-snake was basking.'

It is not clear for which readership the work is intended. Presumably, few amateurs will feel justified in paying the high price, especially when they can get much information and more mental stimulation from Moreau's work. Will professionals welcome being told 'Ecologically there is a fundamental distinction between savanna- and forest-dwelling birds'? Frankly, I doubt whether the time was yet ripe for a comprehensive up-dating of Moreau's work, but, given that there was a contractual commitment to publish something, surely the publishers could have contemplated a less extravagant, more useful, format. Add to a plan which it is all too easy to criticise, poor sub-editing (for example an erratum map is added loose, while the new species 'Lesser black-headed gull' appears in both text and index) and the result is a thoroughly disappointing book, from an author who could certainly have given us something much more worthwhile.

ROBERT SPENCER

The Birds of the West Midlands. By Graham R. Harrison, Alan R. Dean, Alan J. Richards and David Smallshire. West Midland Bird Club, Studley, 1982. 494 pages; 82 black-and-white plates; some line-drawings. £15.00.

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A fault of many county avifaunas is the absence of good maps showing localities; that is not the case here. Together with the excellent essays describing the areas and well-chosen photographs, the atmosphere of this heartland of England is brilliantly presented: I feel now that I know many of the areas which I have never visited.

The 2,000 members of the West Midland Bird Club have been well served. Doubtless they will soon make its systematic list out-of-date, and man's activities may modify the habitats, but the next book dealing with the birds of the West Midlands, even if it is not named as a revision of this one, will be based firmly on the work done by Graham Harrison, Alan Dean, Alan Richards and David Smallshire.

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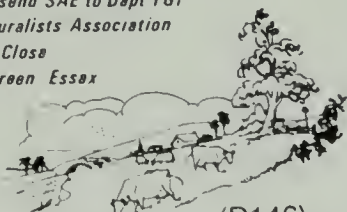
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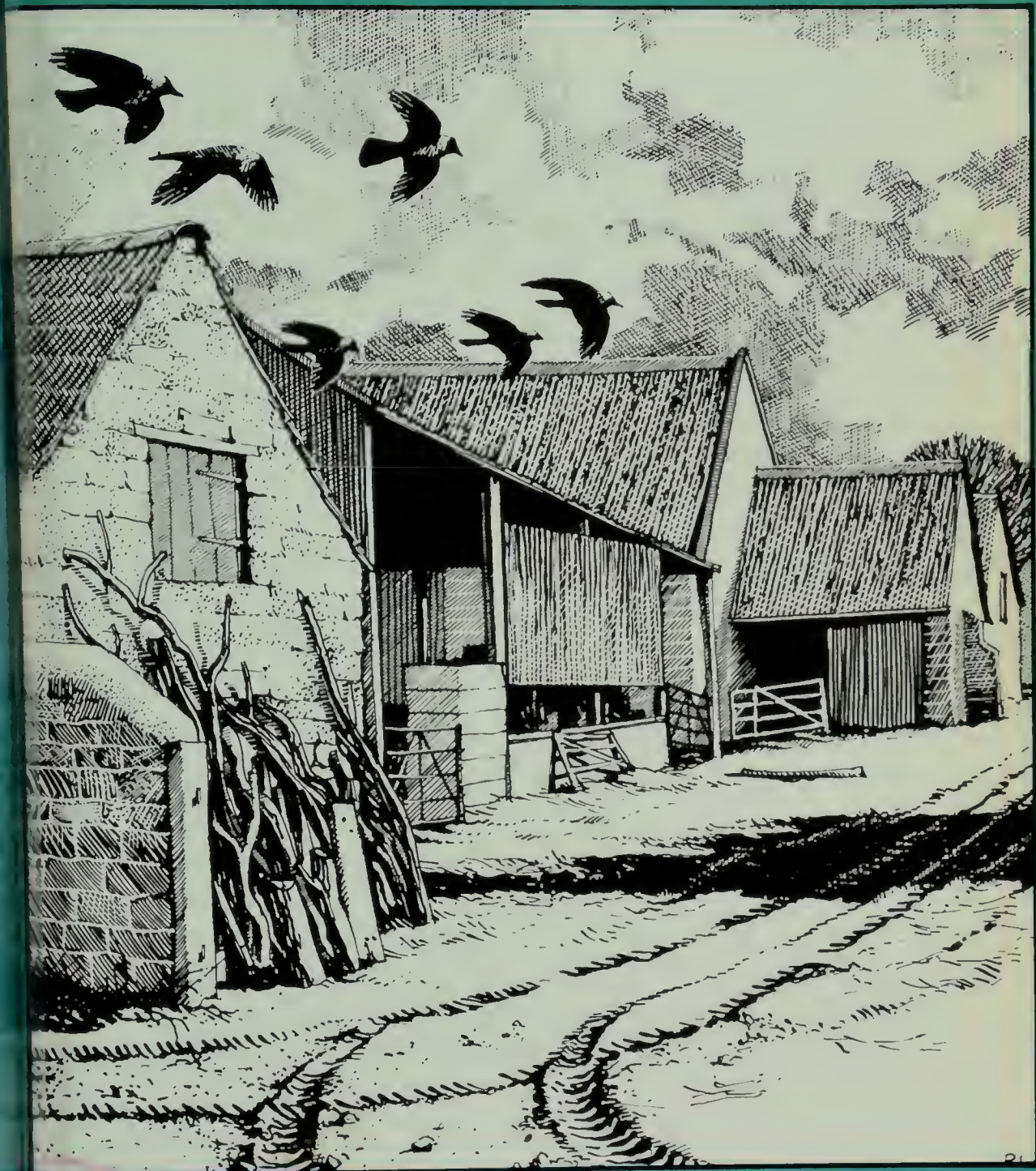
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'Sap-sucking' by woodpeckers
Survey of Europe's breeding birds
Two female Hen Harriers at one nest
Identification pitfalls: White Stork
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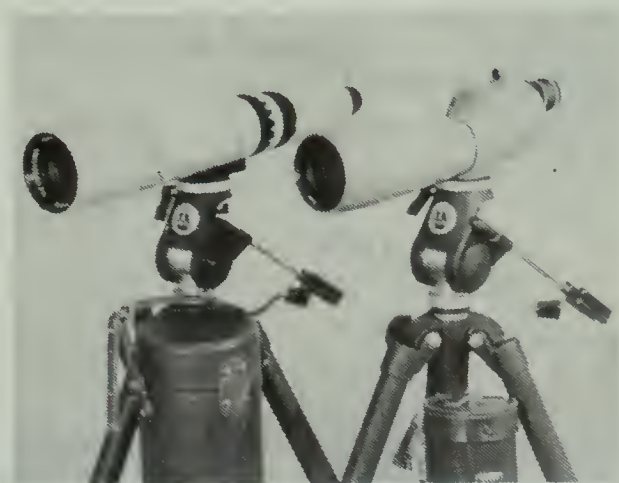
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British Birds

VOLUME 76 NUMBER 3 MARCH 1983

Sandhill Crane: new to Britain



Nick Riddiford



There was little sign of any migrant activity on Fair Isle, Shetland, early on the morning of 26th April 1981. The light northwest wind had brought nothing but a series of snow flurries, falling from a leaden sky. But, at 10.00 GMT, D. G. Borton reported seeing a crane flying over Ward Hill, though in poor weather conditions he had been unable to ascertain which species.

An hour later, the bird appeared over the Observatory building. At this stage, we assumed that it would be a common Crane *Grus grus*. Even when directly under it, however, we strained unsuccessfully, in driving snow and poor visibility, to see the expected striped neck pattern. Indeed, the initial impressions of I. S. Robertson and C. D. Rowley were that the entire plumage, including neck and face, was uniform grey with red on the forepart of the head, apparently reaching the base of the bill. Having gathered this puzzling information, we were left to ponder, for the bird disappeared northwards.

At lunch-time, ISR, familiar with the species in Texas, suggested the possibility of Sandhill Crane *Grus canadensis*, but no-one was prepared to consider this seriously until better views of the bird had been obtained. As if on cue, the clouds rolled back, the sun came out, and shortly afterwards the crane reappeared, soaring against a blue sky over Landberg. Lunch ended suddenly.

During the next four hours, the bird circled continuously over the island.

For long periods, it spiralled over Field and Busta. This allowed us to position ourselves to best advantage and we were at last able to obtain accurate details of its plumage. We soon realised that we were indeed looking at a Sandhill Crane: a pale sandy and grey crane with uniform sandy neck apart from a red patch running from the forepart of the crown to the base of the bill and a narrow whitish fan over the ear-coverts. It was a large, rakish-looking bird, how large we came to appreciate when it was joined in its spiral by a Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*: the crane was considerably bigger.

It was not until 19.00 hours that we saw the bird on the ground. It was extremely wary, but nevertheless everyone at the Observatory had good views from 150m as it stood in Homisdale. It roosted at Easter Loth Water and was still present the following morning, until the 09.30 plane arrived and put it up. Competition from this larger aerial beast apparently proved too much, as the crane flapped and sailed steadily northeastwards until lost from view.

During the day, we noted the following details:

GENERAL APPEARANCE Clearly a crane, but with very thin neck and thin legs momentarily suggesting flamingo *Phoenicopterus* in outline, though wings broad and fingered. Generally held wings straight when circling and gliding, and, with well-demarcated and equal fingers, wings seemed rectangular as in Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus*. Neck jutted out in front, and legs extended as far behind. Head not very much thicker than neck, and this, with dagger-shaped bill, emphasised thinness of the protruding parts.

HEAD Forehead, surrounds of eye, and upper half of lores red. In some lights, shade of red over eye appeared darker and deeper than on forehead, and at times 'eye patch' appeared virtually black, presumably effect of shadow. 'Face' (i.e. lower part of lores, ear-coverts and up towards nape) very pale off-white, this area being fan-shaped, and broadest at upper and hind margins of ear-coverts. Off-white face contrasted markedly with rest of head and neck.

NECK Long, thin neck held outstretched at all times in flight. On the ground, it was held upright and straight, and was kept straight even when preening. Uniform beige-buff, apart from entire hindneck which was mid-grey.

UPPERPARTS Appeared beige to sandy buff throughout, but in good light it became evident that the 'saddle' (mantle, back and scapulars) was mottled grey. In flight, saddle contrasted as darker than wing-coverts and appeared to have longways mottling or diffuse streaking. On the ground, saddle appeared mottled grey on beige background, with grey predominant (a pale to mid grey, similar in tone and coloration to the hindneck). Grey did not appear to extend to rump/uppertail-coverts. Short, fanned tail appeared in flight to be sandy buff above with indistinct dark terminal border. On the ground, tail hidden by long tertial and tertial-covert plumes.

UPPERWING Secondaries and primaries, including 'fingers', dark, dull grey-black, forming relatively narrow borders to trailing edge and tip of wing. Rest of upperwing, comprising all the wing-coverts, appeared uniform sandy buff. On the ground, primaries and secondaries completely covered by tuft of downcurving feathers (plumes): elongated tertial-coverts and perhaps tertials. Thus, on the ground, visible part of wing was sandy buff, contrasting with grey of saddle.

UNDERPARTS: Whole underparts from chin to undertail-coverts appeared sandy buff, with suggestion of cinnamon wash to breast and belly. Tail from below (seen when bird in flight) pale, with more marked dark terminal border than from above.

UNDERWING Secondaries and primaries, including 'fingers', dark but not as intense as on upperwing, and border to trailing edge becoming far less distinct on inner wing. Five or six 'fingers' (tricky to count). Underwing-coverts sandy buff, but dark tips to one set of coverts, probably median underwing-coverts, produced indistinct diagonal line from near wing tip towards axillaries. No contrast apparent between sandy buff of underwing-coverts and underparts.



43. First-summer Sandhill Crane *Grus canadensis*, Shetland, April 1981 (*J. F. Holloway*)

BARE PARTS Bill dagger-shaped, looking pale yellow-brown in some lights, particularly distal two-thirds, but in fact dull grey (trick of the light). Similarly, legs appeared in some lights, particularly when bird airborne, as dull orangy brown, but on ground were dull grey-green. In flight, feet visible as 'clenched fists' or 'bunch of grapes' attached to thin, straight legs.

CALL Heard on a number of occasions: honking, rolling 'carr-rooo', reminiscent in tone of Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*.

Discussion

The main features which identified the bird as a Sandhill Crane were the pale sandy buff plumage, the uniformly marked neck, the off-white fan-shaped face patch, and the red forecrown, forehead, eye and lores patch. It appeared to be in first-summer plumage: on adults the red patch extends farther on to the crown, and the plumage is more extensively grey. This bird had red extending to the forecrown and only just behind the eye, and was predominantly a beige or sandy buff colour, with the 'adult' grey apparent only on the hindneck, mantle, back and scapulars, where the grey appeared as mottling, perhaps suggesting a mixture of adult and first-year feathers (see Cramp & Simmons 1979).

Whenever a large and exotic bird appears in any part of Britain, the first question is whether it is an escape from captivity. Several factors are against the Fair Isle individual having been an escape. First the species is rare in captivity in Britain and, if a first-summer bird, would either have been imported in the last year or have been bred in captivity. Secondly, Fair Isle is remote from any exotic bird collection and this individual would have had to approach the island against northwesterly headwinds to reach it from mainland Britain. Thirdly, the bird was wild and wary, flying the length of the island time and time again for six hours before it chose to land;

on the ground, it would not allow approach nearer than 150m.

The weather conditions would have assisted the crane on a transatlantic flight. It may have been swept out into the Atlantic by strong westerly winds south of a deepening depression which developed over Newfoundland on 22nd and 23rd April 1981. Assuming direct transatlantic passage, the bird may have left the American mainland on either of those days. Once it had outridden the influence of the depression, it would have found itself in an area of slack air associated with an anticyclone in mid Atlantic and, at about 50°N, would have encountered light westerlies on 23rd and 24th backing southwest on 25th as the anticyclone changed to a ridge of high pressure. Southwesterly winds on 25th would have allowed the bird a downwind movement to about 60°N, where a northwesterly airstream awaited it. This northwest wind was blowing on Fair Isle on 26th, the day of the bird's arrival.

Thus, it is possible to map out an itinerary for the crane, with following winds for the entire passage. This, however, raises two interesting points. First, the species is rare in eastern Canada, and migration is mainly to the west of the Great Lakes (Godfrey 1966); this bird must therefore have either undertaken misorientated movement from well inland when under the influence of the Newfoundland depression or must previously have been displaced towards the east coast of America. Secondly, for displacement to have occurred under inclement conditions, the bird must have left the American coast on 22nd or 23rd April, entailing a three- or four-day transatlantic flight: a quite considerable feat of endurance, particularly as the bird did not immediately land on Fair Isle and quickly moved on again the following morning. Alternatively, the bird may have come to Fair Isle following previous transatlantic displacement, perhaps to Iceland, the Faeroes or Shetland. From any of these localities, a downwind flight on the northerly to northwesterly winds of 25th/26th April could have brought it to Fair Isle. If, however, the bird had undertaken a direct Atlantic crossing, it may well have shown a marked northeasterly orientation throughout its movement: this would have taken it into the adverse weather of the Newfoundland depression; then, re-directed northeastward movement in the slack area of mid Atlantic would have brought it to 60° latitudes. A steady northeasterly heading was taken upon its departure from Fair Isle on the morning of 27th April.

Distribution and previous western Palearctic records

Migratory races breed in northeast Siberia, northern Alaska and central Canada east to Ontario. Migratory and resident races occur from northern California across southern and central USA to Alabama and Georgia and south to Florida and Cuba. The migratory populations winter in the southern states of the USA, with some penetrating as far as central Mexico (Cramp & Simmons 1979; Godfrey 1966). The species is a vagrant to eastern Canada and the Atlantic States of the USA (Cramp & Simmons 1979).

The Fair Isle bird has been accepted by the BOU Records Committee for inclusion in category A of the British and Irish list and constitutes the first

record for Britain, though not for the British Isles. A bird of the nominate race which was shot in Co. Cork, Ireland, on 14th September 1905 was placed in category B (BOU 1972) and is the only other western Palearctic record.

Acknowledgments

I should like to thank John Arnott for suggesting a number of improvements to the text and Dave Wheeler for making available North Atlantic surface synoptic charts and for his assistance in interpreting the prevalent weather conditions. John Holloway kindly provided the line-drawing and photograph.

Summary

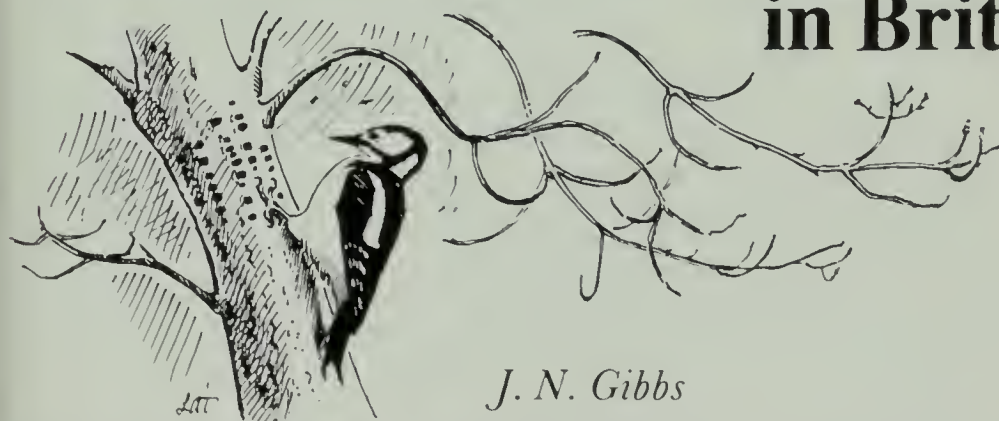
A Sandhill Crane *Grus canadensis*, probably a first-summer, was identified at Fair Isle, Shetland, on 26th and 27th April 1981. The bird is described, its origin and means of reaching Fair Isle are discussed, and the species' range is given. The only previous west Palearctic occurrence was in Ireland in September 1905.

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Nick Riddiford, Bird Observatory, Fair Isle, Shetland

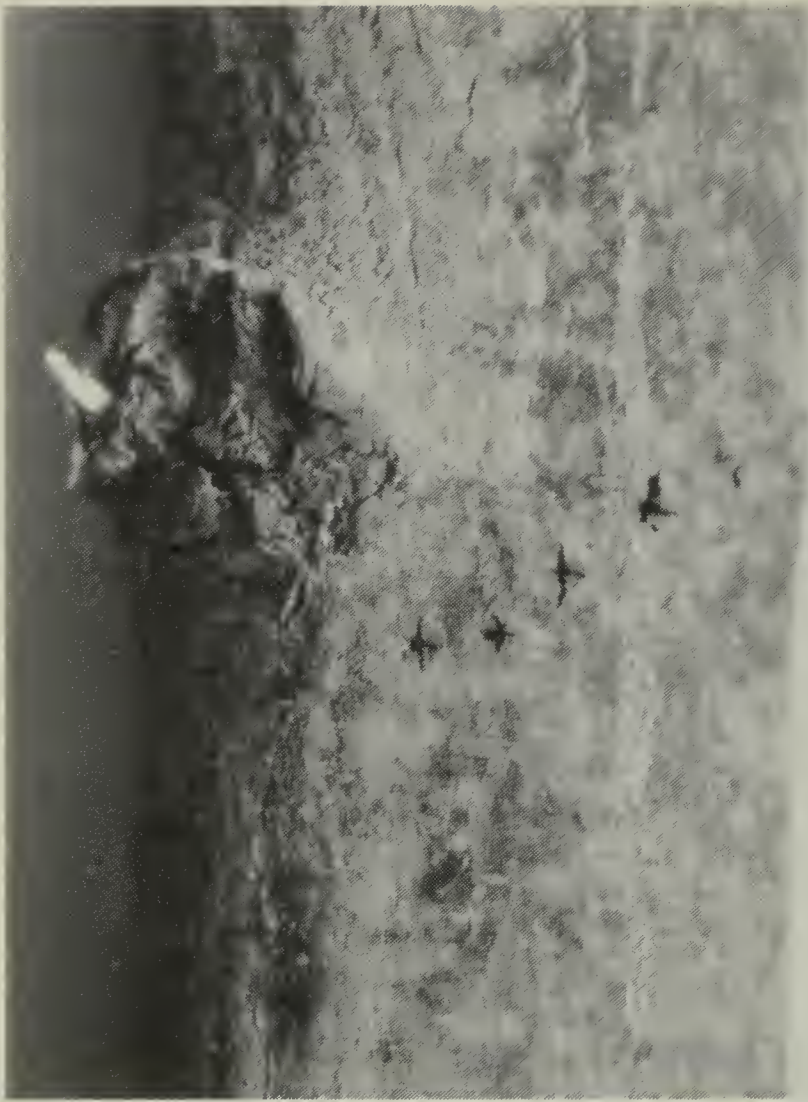
'Sap-sucking' by woodpeckers in Britain



J. N. Gibbs

The production by woodpeckers (Picidae) of rows of 'peck marks' on the stems of healthy trees is well documented for various European countries such as Czechoslovakia (Turček 1954) and Germany (Gatter 1972). It is known as 'tree ringing' or 'drilling', and the Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major* is the species most commonly implicated; Turček considered the Black Woodpecker *D. martius* the second most important species, followed by the Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis* and the Three-toed Woodpecker *Picoides tridactylus*.

It is invariably stated that the holes are made for the purpose of obtaining



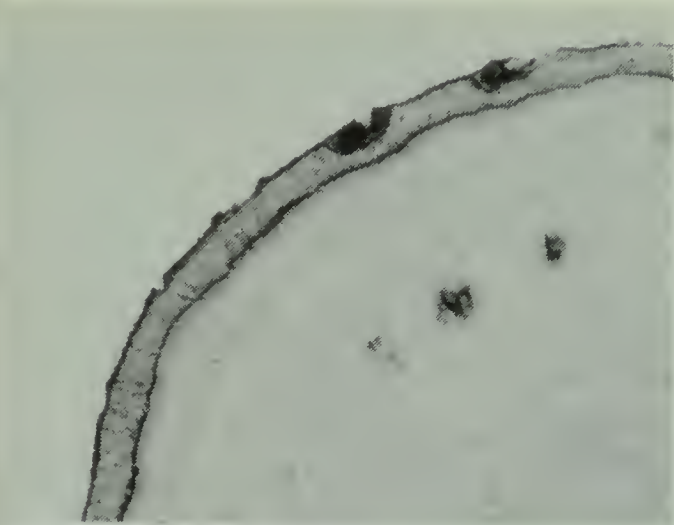
44. Row of 'puncture-type' marks on stem of young oak *Quercus* (4-cm diameter) (J. N. Gibbs)

sap, as with North American sapsuckers *Sphyrapicus*, and there is certainly evidence for this. Turček (1954) reported a Great Spotted Woodpecker repeatedly returning to drink sap bleeding from a newly ringed maple *Acer*, and a sequence in Heinz Sielmann's (1973) famous film 'Woodpecker' shows a Middle Spotted Woodpecker *D. media* both ringing the bark and taking sap.

In this paper, I attempt to summarise the available information on this phenomenon in Britain and to discuss how far tree ringing is synonymous with sap-sucking.

Species of woodpecker involved

The only unequivocal sightings in Britain relate to the Great Spotted Woodpecker, which R. J. Jennings (1965 and *in litt.*) regularly observed pecking in Flaxley Woods, Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire, during 1959-65. He noted that the birds 'began at the top of the previous marks and worked downhill, just lowering themselves the length of their bodies when moving'. In 1963, G. J. R. Broadhead (1964 and *in litt.*) observed a Great Spotted Woodpecker at work for almost an hour in a young plantation of sycamores *Acer pseudoplatanus* at Wentbridge, South Yorkshire.



45. Flecks in the xylem of oak *Quercus* corresponding to marks in the bark. The damage can easily be dated to the appropriate year (J. N. Gibbs)

Nature of the damage

Fresh peck marks often have a sharp edge and seem to involve a simple puncturing of the bark, as if by a single blow (plate 44); sometimes, however, discrete pieces of bark are removed. The marks persist for many years, gradually becoming larger as the stem increases in size. If a stem is cut through a line of pecks, a corresponding fleck is usually found in the xylem of the year in which the mark was made (plate 45).

Tree species affected

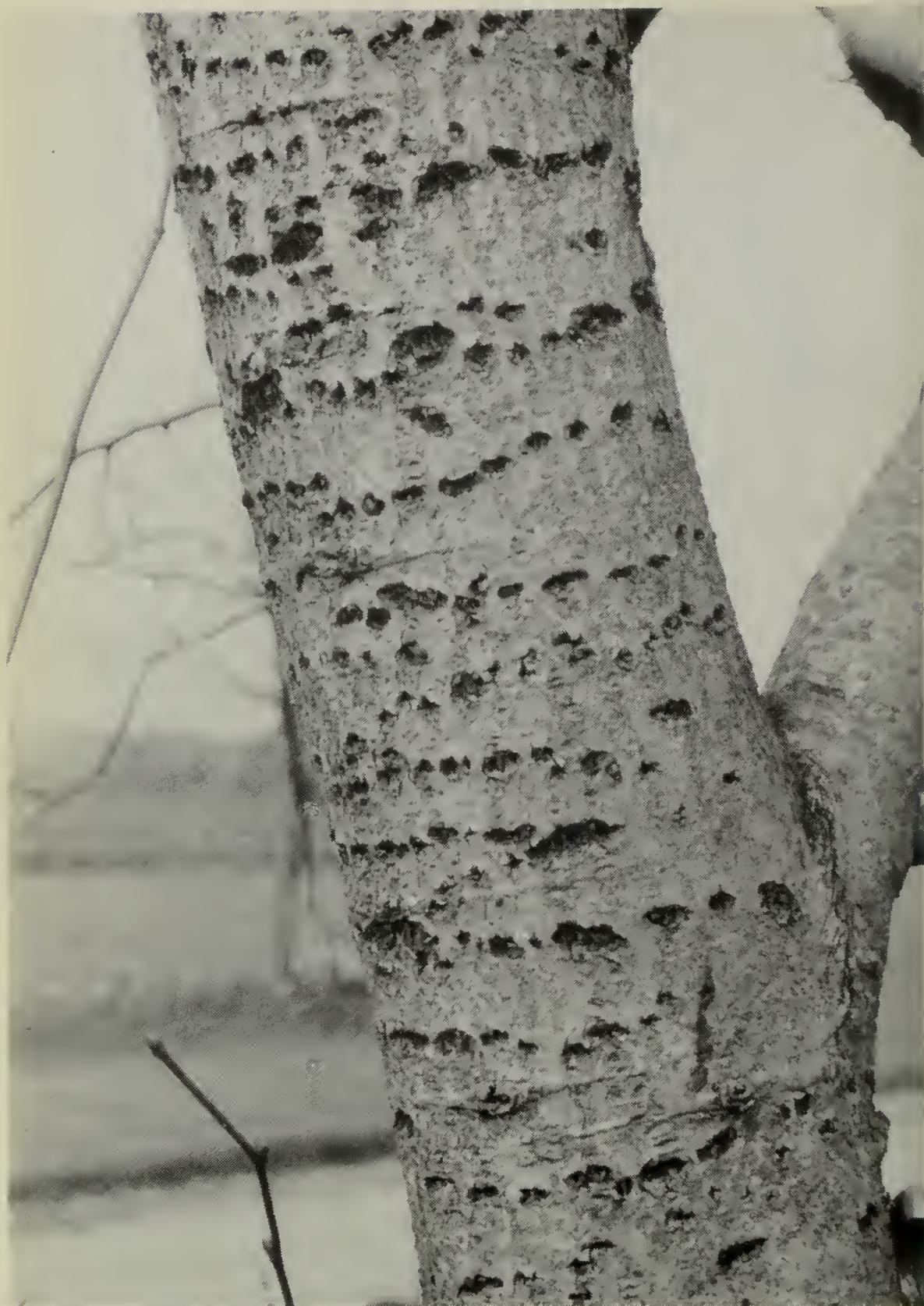
Sample records of damage done to four different tree species in different locations are given in table 1.

LIME Many of R. J. Jennings' observations of pecking in Flaxley Woods referred to the small-leaved lime *Tilia cordata*, on 'green healthy trees in full leaf' (Jennings 1965). Damage to this species has also been noted in Wiltshire and Gloucestershire (D. J. Rice *in litt.*). Peck marks have also been recorded on American lime *T. americana*, Oliver's lime *T. oliveri* (A. F. Mitchell *in litt.*) and Caucasian lime *T. euchlora* (plate 46). Examination of some rows of fresh marks on this last species in late June 1981 revealed the presence of small quantities of exudate on the bark just below the wounds; some fragments of bark had been removed. Heavy pecking of a lime in Leigh Woods, Somerset, was described by Wynne-Edwards (1933), but the species of lime was not identified.

Table 1. Sample records of peck-mark damage by woodpeckers (Picidae) involving a number of trees

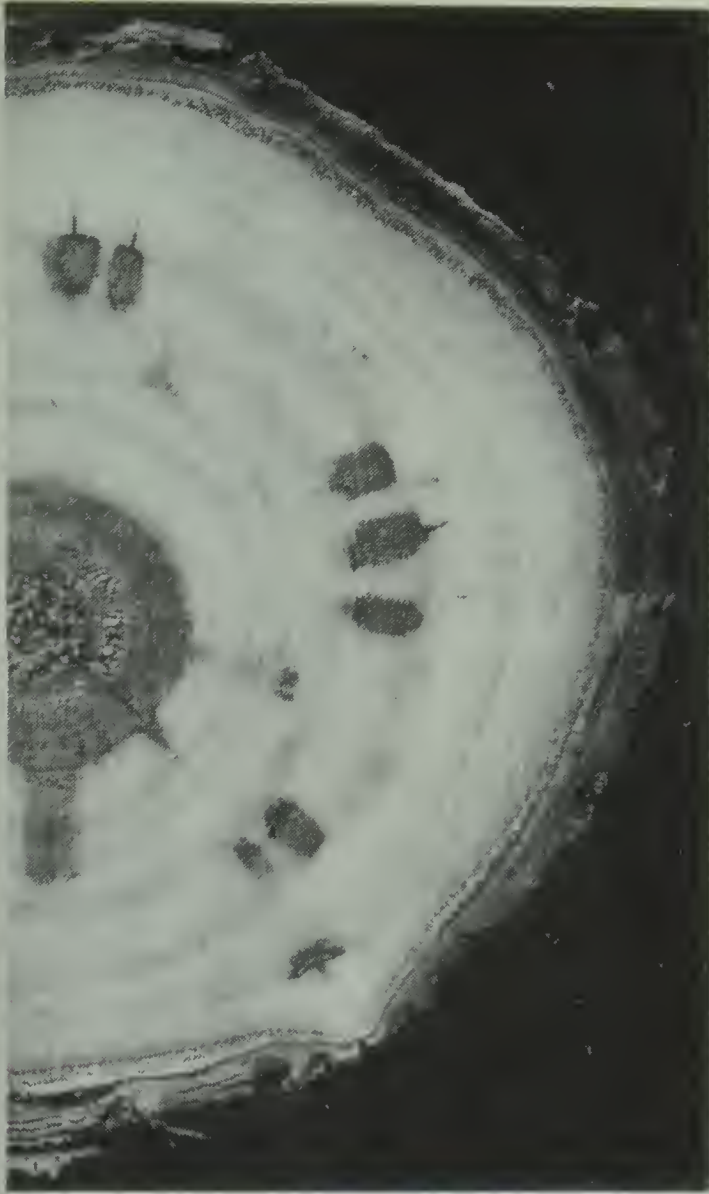
Severity of damage is indicated by increasing number of crosses; damage illustrated in plate 46 would correspond to three crosses (+++)

Tree species	Location	Age (yrs)	Approx. no. trees with damage	Average severity of damage
Caucasian lime	Hungerford, Wiltshire	15	35	+++
<i>Tilia euchlora</i>	Dyrham, Avon	20	10	++
Pedunculate oak	Thetford Chase, Norfolk	20-40	500	++
<i>Quercus robur</i>	Alice Holt Forest, Hants.	40	100	++
	Forest of Dean, Glos.	40	50	+
Wych elm <i>Ulmus glabra</i>	Crickhowell, Powys	20-50	20	++
Small-leaved elm				
<i>Ulmus carpiniifolia</i>	Alice Holt Forest, Hants.	15	20	+++



46. Multiple rows of peck marks on 15-year-old Caucasian lime *Tilia euchlora*. With this species, fragments of bark may sometimes be removed (J. N. Gibbs)

OAK Peck marks are very common on pedunculate oak *Quercus robur* in parts of southern England. Sections cut through trees from the Forest of Dean and Alice Holt Forest, Hampshire, show that they may be made in both dormant and growing seasons, and that the same tree may be revisited year after year and new rows of marks created. All damage seems to be of the puncturing type, and no exudation has been observed. Wounds made in June and July may



47. Cross-section of stem of elm *Ulmus* showing small healed cankers associated with peck marks (J. N. Gibbs)

be utilised for egg-laying by a gall midge *Resseliella*, and sizeable cankers can be formed (Gibbs 1982). The North American red oak *Q. rubra* may also be heavily pecked.

ELM Elm is evidently favoured. In Savernake Forest, Wiltshire, abundant peck marks were noted on the stem of a wych elm *Ulmus glabra*, while oaks of a similar size in the immediate vicinity were unaffected. As with oak, marks are of the puncturing type. Pecking on elm may result in the formation of cankers (plate 47), similar to but much smaller than those found on oak, and a species of *Resseliella* again appears to be responsible (J. N. Gibbs, unpublished data). Dutch elm disease has caused a dearth of elms of suitable size in much of southern Britain, and this may well have resulted in more pecking activity on other species.

SYCAMORE Serious damage to many young sycamores at Wentbridge occurred during the very severe winter of 1962/63. Single scattered wounds were observed at various points on the stem, and a single complete ring of marks at about 1.5 m. A discrete piece of bark had been removed at each point and allowed to fall to the ground. Sap flowing copiously from the complete ring saturated the bark (Broadhead 1964; R. T. Hurst, unpublished). As mentioned above, a Great Spotted Woodpecker was observed at work in the plantation.

In more recent studies by Dr J. Rishbeth (*in litt.*), in a stand of self-sown 20-year-old sycamores in the Brandon plantation, King's Forest, Norfolk, pecking activity appears to have begun in 1965 and to have continued for about ten years. In February 1970, fresh wounds involving the removal of fragments of bark were discovered; on one tree, sap was exuding from a row of marks at 0.9 m, but not from a similar row at 1.5 m. The only other record on maples in



48. Rows of peck marks on lower trunk of *Populus* \times *berolinensis*. It is likely that these pecks were made at least ten years before the photograph was taken (J. N. Gibbs)

Britain is for the sycamore cultivar 'Prinz Handjery' at the Hillier Arboretum in Hampshire (A. F. Mitchell *in litt.*).

OTHER SPECIES Poplars may be quite conspicuously marked: two free-grown specimens of *Populus* \times *berolinensis* at Alice Holt are covered with dense rows of peck marks from 8 m down to ground level (plate 48). Damage has also been recorded on willow *Salix*, but care should be taken not to confuse the conspicuous lenticels with peck marks (plate 49). Certain exotic trees

are attacked very commonly: these include Chilean beech *Nothofagus procera*/*N. dombeyi*, and Nyman's hybrid *Eucryphia*. There are also occasional records for box *Buxus sempervirens*, sweet chestnut *Castanea sativa*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and acacia *Robinia pseudoacacia* (A. F. Mitchell and G. Tuley *in litt.*).

Geographical distribution of damage

Most of the records have been in southern England. My colleagues and I, however, have seen peck marks on wych elm in Powys, Shropshire and Cumbria. Damage has also been recorded on poplars at Appin Wood, Argyll (J. Boluski *in litt.*); this could have been made only by the Great Spotted Woodpecker, as the ranges of the other woodpecker species do not extend so far north in Britain (Sharrock 1976).

Comparative records for Europe

The preferred tree species in Britain are also commonly attacked in Europe: in central Europe, Turček (1954) listed lime, oak and maple among the four favoured broad-leaved genera; the other genus is birch *Betula*, for which there is as yet no record for Britain. In Baden Wurttemberg, Gatter (1972) listed wych elm, oak, lime and Norway maple *A. platanoides* as the most important species. Zycha (1970) described the anatomy of peck-mark damage on red oak, and showed a photograph of small cankers on wych elm that are very similar to those in plate 47. Pecking on oak is also reported from central France (Morelet 1980). In Europe, pines *Pinus* are often attacked, as also are silver firs *Abies alba* and spruce *Picea* (Turček 1954, Zycha 1970). There are also occasional records for a wide range of native and exotic species.

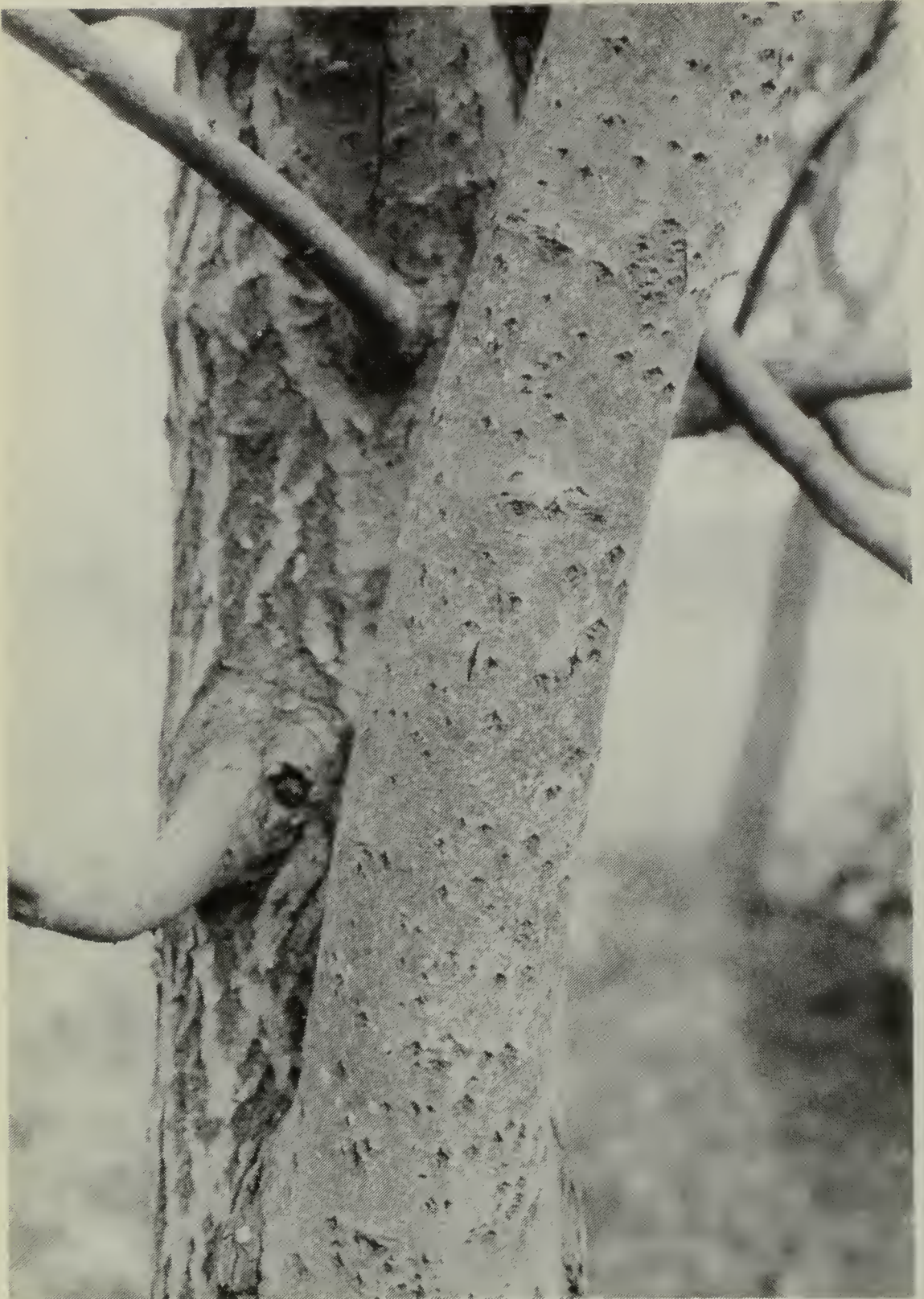
Turček (1954) considered that most ringed trees were abnormal in shape or appearance, or were growing on unsuitable sites. This contrasts with our experience, where many pecked trees are well-grown individuals in park-land or hedgerow, or are dominant trees at the margins of plantations.

The role of spotted woodpeckers in North America

The behaviour of the Great Spotted Woodpecker in Europe prompts a comment on the situation in North America, where there has been some controversy as to whether the allied Hairy *D. villosus* and Downy Woodpeckers *D. pubescens* are ever responsible for sap-sucking. Since the work of Townsend (1932), it has been assumed that all rings of holes are made by the true sapsuckers *Sphyrapicus*. Ohman & Kessler (1964), however, reported on 'bird peck' damage to sugar maple *Acer saccharum* in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, where there were differences in the 'timing, pattern and portion of the tree attacked' from that observed with the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker *S. varius*. It is particularly interesting to note that the marks comprised single rows of small holes, and that they were made so early in the season that it was somewhat difficult to reconcile them with the arrival of the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker from its overwintering grounds in the south. The possibility that the holes could have been made by a resident spotted woodpecker merits examination.

The reason for pecking

A clear distinction must be made between pecking of sycamore (and other



49. A trap for the unwary: lenticels on a young stem of willow *Salix* (J. N. Gibbs)

maples) and pecking of certain other species such as oak and elm. On sycamore, the activity takes place in the dormant season and involves bark removal; whereas on oak and elm much of the activity occurs in the summer, and the wound often involves only a simple puncturing of the bark. Maples, including sycamore, are unusual among trees in that, when the right climatic conditions prevail during winter, they will yield abundant

xylem sap (the basis for the maple sugar industry in North America). It seems probable that certain populations of woodpeckers have learnt that sycamores can be sources of moisture at a time when open water is frozen. This would be consistent with Broadhead's (1964) report that the birds made trial pecks down the stem until they reached a level at which a copious flow of xylem sap occurred. As the observations of Rishbeth indicate, the rate of sap exudation can be greater near ground level than higher up the stem.

With species such as oak and elm, xylem sap is not available at any time of the year. Wounds in late summer can, however, result in the exudation of small drops of phloem sap. Perhaps it is this that the woodpeckers are seeking. Alternatively, pecking on these tree species might have no nutritional purpose. It seems likely that further information on this problem can be obtained only by detailed observations of woodpeckers at work. It is hoped that this review will stimulate ornithologists to carry out such studies.

Acknowledgments

This paper is compiled from observations made by many people and I am very grateful to them. I should like to express particular thanks to my colleagues Hugh Insley, Alan Mitchell and Graham Tuley for much information and helpful discussion. I am also very grateful to Dr John Rishbeth of the University of Cambridge for the detailed account of the damage to sycamores in Norfolk.

Summary

In Britain, the Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major* produces rows of 'peck marks' on the young stems of trees. Commonly affected genera include elm *Ulmus*, lime *Tilia*, oak *Quercus*, poplar *Populus* and sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*. On sycamore, pecking occurs in winter, and there is little doubt that xylem sap is taken. It is not clear, however, whether 'sap-sucking' is the reason for pecking activities on other trees such as elm and oak. More observations of the birds at work are required.

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Survey of some of Europe's breeding birds

J. T. R. Sharrock and Olavi Hildén

In an attempt to establish basic information on changes in status of the breeding birds of Europe for a paper presented at the XVIII International Ornithological Congress in Moscow, we contacted one correspondent in each European country. The detailed results of our questionnaire will, in due course, be published in the Proceedings of the IOC ('A summary of recent avian range changes in Europe', Hildén & Sharrock, in press). This covers the sources of error in the method as well as analysing the distribution changes shown for all the European breeding species. Here, in this present paper, we take as examples just a few of the especially interesting species.

Method

Each correspondent was asked to summarise each species' status in his country by assigning it to one of the following categories:

- Currently increasing in range (+)
- Currently decreasing in range (—)
- No known significant change in range (0)
- Status unknown (?)
- No breeding records (blank)

Replies were received from 30 countries: every sizeable country in Europe except for Albania and Turkey, and also separately for the Estonian SSR, the Latvian SSR and the Lithuanian SSR (in addition to the remainder of the European portion of the Soviet Union). The answers were plotted onto separate maps for each of the 431 breeding species of Europe.

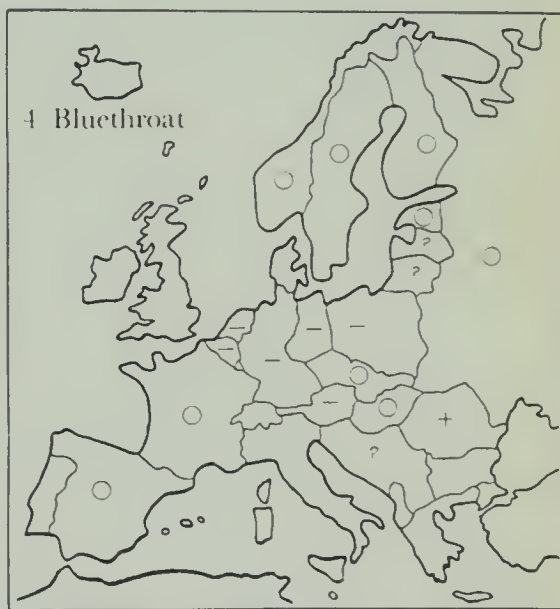
Some results

One of the striking features shown by the correspondents' opinions when plotted as maps is the uniformity of pattern: mostly +, mostly —, mostly 0, or a patch of several contiguous countries all showing one trend. The maps which follow serve as examples. With a few exceptions, we have chosen not



to show those for which the trends were already very well known (e.g. Corncrake *Crex crex* or Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*).

The most widespread and common of the European owls, the Tawny Owl *Strix aluco* (fig. 1), is a good example of a 'static' species which is apparently not currently undergoing any marked changes in either distribution or numbers anywhere in Europe (except in the Lithuanian SSR). In contrast, the Little Owl *Athene noctua* (fig. 2) was regarded as currently contracting its range in 14 countries.



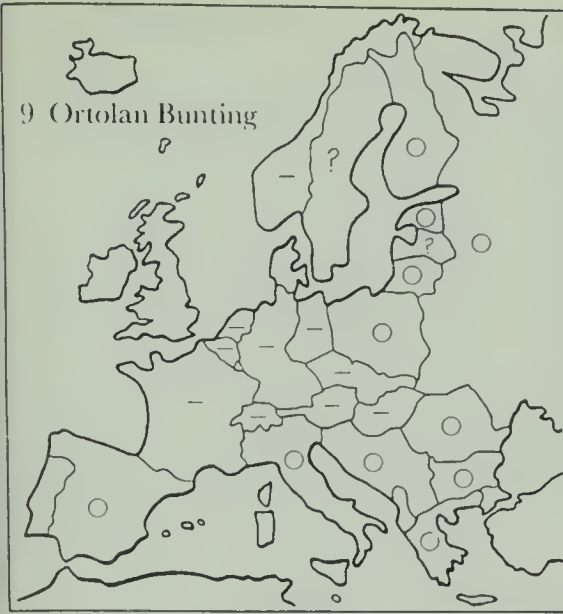
Whereas there must be hope that the expanding range of Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia* (fig. 3) will soon extend to include northern Britain, there seems little chance that the Bluethroat *L. svecica* (fig. 4) will colonise, in view of its declining status in neighbouring parts of the Continent. A general decline in central Europe but mostly unchanging status elsewhere is a pattern shown by a number of species, including Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* (fig. 5), Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*, Dipper *Cinclus cinclus*, Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* (fig. 6), Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* (fig. 7), Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella* (fig. 8) and



Ortolan Bunting *E. hortulana* (fig. 9). Some species, whilst seeming steady in western Europe, have declines clearly in progress in eastern parts of the Continent: examples are Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*, Skylark *Alauda arvensis* and Swallow *Hirundo rustica* (fig. 10). A contraction southwards is suggested by those species, such as Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* and Hoopoe *Upupa epops* (fig. 11), which are declining in the north or north-western parts of their range but not elsewhere. Others, such as Garganey *Anas querquedula*, Hobby *Falco subbuteo*, Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix*, Capercaillie *T. urogallus*, Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix*, Quail *Coturnix coturnix* (fig. 12), Corncrake and Crested Lark *Galerida cristata*, are declining almost everywhere.

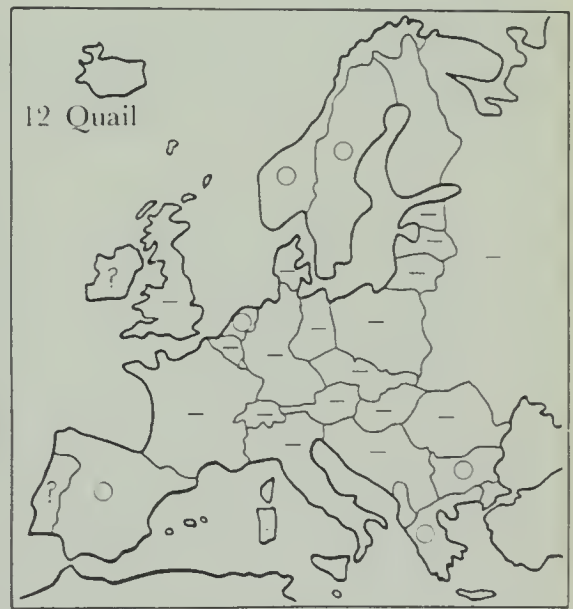


In contrast, other species show widespread expansion of range. These include not only expected species such as Pochard *Aythya ferina*, Tufted Duck *A. fuligula*, Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* and Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*, but also a whole selection, including Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*, Greylag Goose *Anser anser*, Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* (fig. 13) and



Redpoll *Carduelis flammea*. Even Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* falls into this group, showing that the encouraging recent increases in Britain (*Brit. Birds* 76: 9) are just part of a Europe-wide trend.

Another very marked trend concerns a group of species currently faring far better and expanding their ranges in Fenno-Scandia whilst static or even decreasing farther south in Europe. These are the ones which we may hope and indeed expect will colonise northern Britain in due course. This group includes Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*, Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*, Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*, River Warbler *L. fluviatilis*, Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*, Great Reed Warbler *A. arundinaceus* (fig. 14).



Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria*, Great Grey Shrike *L. excubitor* and Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica*. Finally, other potential colonists include the not-yet-established Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris* (fig. 15) and the eagerly awaited Scarlet Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* (fig. 16).



Of the 431 species, 54 are confined to small populations or to only a handful of countries. The remaining 377 species can be grouped as follows:

Largely no change in range	134 (36%)
No change or decreasing	91 (24%)
No change or increasing	47 (12%)
Decreasing in some parts, but increasing in others	44 (12%)
Largely decreasing	29 (8%)
Largely increasing	26 (7%)
Status generally unknown	6 (2%)

Only in northern Europe does the number of increasing species equal that of those decreasing; in the rest of Europe, the majority of species showing change were regarded as declining.



For the full details of this survey of national correspondents' opinions, and assessments of the various factors (natural and man-induced) which cause changes in bird distribution and abundance, readers are referred to the forthcoming Congress Proceedings.

Acknowledgments

The results shown here and in our IOC paper are based entirely on the opinions of the following correspondents, who went to enormous trouble to compile their national lists for the purpose of this analysis, and to whom we extend our very great thanks: Jānis Baumanis (Latvian SSR), Dr Johan Bekhuis (Netherlands), Mrs Dorete Bloch (Faeroe Islands), Dr Victor Ciochia (Romania), Michel Cuisin (France), Dr Pierre Devillers (Belgium), Tommy Dybbro (Denmark), Steinar Eldøy (Norway), Professor V. E. Flint (European USSR), Professor Arnthor Gardarsson (Iceland), Dr Iztok Geister (Yugoslavia), László Haraszthy (Hungary), Dr Olavi Hildén (Finland), Professor Dr Erik Kumari (Estonian SSR), V. V. Logminas (Lithuanian SSR), Dr G. Mauersberger (German Democratic Republic), Dr Taniu Michev (Bulgaria), Dipl.-Ing. Günther Müller (Greece), Dr Azelio Ortali, Dr E. A. Di Carlo and Dr Joachim Heinze (Italy), Ken Preston (Republic of Ireland), Peter Prokop (Austria), Professor Dr F. J. Purroy (Spain), Dr Goetz Rheinwald (Federal German Republic), Rui Rufino (Portugal), Dr J. T. R. Sharrock (United Kingdom), Dr Karel Stastný (Czechoslovakia), Joe Sultana (Malta), Dr Sören Svensson and Lennart Risberg (Sweden), Dr Ludwik Tomiałojć (Poland) and Dr Raffael Winkler (Switzerland).

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N. Picozzi

Two hens, but a single nest: an unusual case of polygyny by Hen Harriers in Orkney

In June 1981, I was told of a nest of Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* on the East Mainland of Orkney with ten eggs, and two females in attendance. Since an unusually high percentage of first-year males (25%) bred on the West Mainland of Orkney in 1981, and one was even bigamous (recorded only once previously in 1971, Balfour & Cadbury 1979), my immediate reaction was that one of the two brown harriers seen at the nest was a first-year male. Balfour (1957) had previously recorded large clutches of nine, ten and 12 harrier eggs, which he referred to as 'super-normal' clutches. He was convinced that, in each case, the eggs were laid by one female. The 12-egg clutch was completed in 24 days, and the other two resulted, or were thought to result, from the hens starting second clutches a few days after the first clutches were complete.

A visit on 12th June, however, confirmed the presence of two hens paired with an adult male. Eight eggs then remained; two sucked eggs were later found nearby and had probably been taken by Carrion Crows *Corvus corone cornix* nesting 200m away. A hide was moved to within 5m of the nest over

the next week. Observations began after the first chick hatched, but, as it was very light in weight, I fostered a two-day-old chick and a hatching egg to the nest on 20th June to be certain that the adults had viable chicks to rear. One colour photograph of the two females at the nest has already been published (*Brit. Birds* 75: plate 67); this paper documents the events at the nest.

Observations

General

Four of the original eggs hatched; the chicks seen alive weighed 16g and 14.5g, and all died within at most three days of hatching. Chicks so light apparently never survive (Picozzi 1980). The foster chicks both eventually fledged. The older of the two females (hereafter *A*) attending the nest had clear yellow eyes and had been ringed by E. Balfour as a first-year in 1974; she was therefore eight years old. The younger female (*B*) was judged from eye colour (Picozzi 1981) to be four years old. It was not known if the hens were related. Circumstantial evidence suggested that they had not nested together previously. Female *A* was very aggressive towards visitors to the nest, while female *B* always gave alarm calls, but did not attack. *B* was, however, usually the first to return to the nest.

Behaviour of females on nest

The most striking feature was the total lack of aggression between the hens on the nest. On her return, *B* covered all the nest contents. When *A* arrived, she first sat on the edge of the nest, then gradually pushed against *B* until

50. Two female Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus* on nest in which each laid eggs, Orkney, June 1981 (N. Picozzi)



they were face to face and their brood patches came together (plate 50). On other occasions, *B* pushed gently under *A* from the side and was then partly covered by her (plate 51). As the foster young grew, female *A* spent less time on the nest, and when the biggest chick was 16 days old all brooding was done by *B*, while *A* hunted nearby or sat on a fence post 20m from the nest.

Feeding the young

When the chicks were small, food was provided entirely by the male. I watched three feeds on 23rd June. At the first, *B* took the food pass while *A* remained brooding the young. At the second, *A* took the pass while *B* brooded. At the third, both females rose, and the prey, a juvenile Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, was passed to the first female to arrive (*A*) but was taken from her talons by *B*. *A* returned to the nest before *B*, who had flown away with the prey to pluck it. When *B* returned with the prey, she stood on it and both pulled at it and fed the young (plate 52). At the end of the feed, *A* left but soon returned with a billful of dry vegetation (plates 53 & 54) for nest lining (Balfour & Macdonald 1970). *B* had brought grass at the end of the previous feed. Co-operation over all the nest duties normally performed by one hen was, therefore, total.

By 2nd July, there had been a change in behaviour. While *B* was brooding the young, *A* killed a Skylark *Alauda arvensis* and flew to the nest with it, giving the soft 'crooo' call usually given by a male returning with prey or a female feeding chicks. *B* responded from the nest with the piercing food call usually given to the male (Cramp & Simmons 1980). She then

51. Two female Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus* brooding small young, just visible beneath four-year-old female on right (second female eight years old). Orkney, June 1981 (N. Picozzi)



rose, took the prey from *A*'s talons and returned to the nest to feed the young alone. *A* sat on a fence post, but, two minutes later, the male arrived with a young rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus* and passed it to *A*, who brought it directly to the nest. Both hens then offered food to the young. When the Skylark was finished, *B* leaned across the nest to pull at flesh on the rabbit carcass; in the process, *A* was gradually dragged across the nest; she stepped off; *B* stepped on but was gradually dragged back. This continued until the chicks had been given enough food and could eat no more.

On 4th July, *A* killed two young larks, transferring one to *B* talon-to-talon. Each female then fed a chick from her own item (E. J. Williams verbally). The male was not seen on 6th July, but *B* gave the food call to *A* whenever *A* flew within sight of the nest. Once, *B* left the nest to hunt. She was unsuccessful and, on her return, *A* gave the food call; that was the only time that I heard *A* call to *B*. On the final session of observations, on 16th July, *A* caught prey which was taken from her talons by *B* and fed to the young. Female *A* had by this time apparently completely assumed the role of the male, and did most of the hunting.

Discussion

The occurrence of polygyny has been well documented for the Hen Harrier (Cramp & Simmons 1980). Occasionally, nests may be close together in an area that would normally be occupied by one pair (100m apart on three occasions in Orkney during 1975-81); more usually, nests of females in the same harem are as far apart as they would be if they were members of

52. Two female Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus* at nest, Orkney, June 1981; both females offer food to the nestlings; note that female on left is still wet from recent bathe (N. Picozzi)



separate pairs ('Types B and C' polygyny, Newton 1979, table 4). There have, however, been exceptional records for six species of birds of prey of two hens incubating on the same nest. Newton termed this 'Type A' polygyny. A notable recent example was that of two Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus* which sat amicably side by side at a Perthshire eyrie in 1976, although they reared no young (*Scot. Wildlife* (1976): 28).

Similar behaviour concerning two females attending the same nest has been recorded for birds other than raptors (e.g. Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* (Armstrong 1961), Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* (Male 1975), Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* (Dale 1980, plate 240) and Rook *Corvus frugilegus* (Green 1980)). These examples are sufficient to indicate that Type A polygyny may occur exceptionally in a variety of species for which co-operative breeding involving 'helpers' (often related individuals) at the nest is not normally found.

My observations in Orkney were particularly interesting for two reasons. First, female harriers are very aggressive towards each other in spring, so the sight of two hens sitting beside each other with no aggression was a surprise. Secondly, the co-operation between the hens which even involved food being caught by one and taken by the other to feed the young appears to be unprecedented in raptors. Had I not fostered chicks to the nest, however, no young would have been produced at this nest, as has often been the case in instances where nests of other species have been recorded with two hens in attendance.

53. Two female Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus* at nest, Orkney, June 1981: after a feed, one female remained on nest to brood young; here, second female has just returned with nest-lining material (N. Picozzi)





54. Two female Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus* at nest, Orkney, June 1981: nest-lining material dropped on back of sitting female (N. Picozzi)

Acknowledgments

Leslie Tait told me of the nest on his land and gave all possible help; he and his family put me into the hide and kindly provided hospitality. I am also obliged to Jim Williams for the loan of his hide and use of his unpublished observations, and to Peter Reynolds for the loan of a second camera. Dr D. Jenkins' helpful comments improved the text.

Summary

Two female Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus* nested together in Orkney in 1981, sharing an adult male and laying ten eggs. Incubation, feeding fostered young and nest sanitation were shared by the two females. Latterly, the older female assumed the role of the male and provided most of the prey.

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Identification pitfalls and assessment problems

3 White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*

Although it may seem puzzling to those not involved in assessing reports of unusual species, unacceptable claims of White Stork are not infrequent. Besides the escape factor, which is quite high, the reasons fall into two basic categories: reports from non-birders, and birds not well seen by practising birders. To the former, several large species with white-and-black plumage-patterns have caused confusion when field guides are searched for a likely answer. These have included White Pelicans *Pelecanus onocrotalus*, Gannets *Sula bassana* in flight, Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus*, Asian Openbill Stork *Anastomus oscitans*, Snow Goose *Anser caerulescens*, Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus* (in flight) and even distant Shelducks *Tadorna tadorna* or Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus* in alert postures. The most frequent problem with records from non-birders, however, is merely the lack of awareness of the degree of proof required; thus, the notes often fail to include such basic items as leg and bill colour, bill shape and proportions, and the precise extent of black on the wings. This is always unfortunate, as White Storks are large, conspicuous and tend to turn up almost anywhere, and are in consequence as often found by an ordinary member of the public as by an experienced birder.



55. White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*, Spain, May 1967 (*Ib Trap-Lind*)

Other unacceptable records relate to birds seen by experienced observers, who feel confident that their identification is correct, but, for which, due to distance or high-flying, adequate detail has not been obtained. Nonetheless, some borderline cases do prove acceptable, particularly when

a good sketch clearly depicts the character of the species (provided that it is not obviously copied from the literature).

Committees should bear in mind that the presence of a ring or rings does not mean that the bird is an escape, as there is an extensive ringing programme on the Continent. Confusion can sometimes arise, somewhat unexpectedly, as it is not always easy to decide on which leg a stork is standing.

M. J. ROGERS

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Personalities

29 W. E. Oddie

Two things immediately struck me when I met Bill Oddie. The first was his stature—he's even smaller than Richard Porter—and the second was his extraordinary energy.



56. Bill Oddie (*Ron Sutherland*)

The occasion was to finalise plans for a trip to India, Bill's first major foreign birding experience. There is nothing like a foreign trip to test birders' compatibility; the stress and strain of organisation and travel, discomfort, lack of sleep, identification problems, illness and the ever-present dread of being gripped-off. Bill coped remarkably well with all of these, claiming that he even found parts of the trip relaxing. We soon changed that on ensuing travels. Or rather, he did.

Proceedings of the Third Nordic Congress of Ornithology, 1981

The Third Nordic Congress of Ornithology was held near Ribe in Denmark 3-9 August 1981. The Proceedings are now available from the printers. The 240-page book presents 20 of the papers given to the Congress (9 in English, 11 in a Nordic language with English summary) and abstracts of 14 additional papers. There is, further, a description of the development of the Congress, reports on the organisation and activities of the Nordic ornithological societies, and resolutions adopted by the Congress. The papers focus mainly on four topics:

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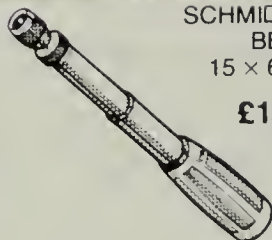
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Bill's background is well documented in his *Little Black Bird Book*, with his qualifications listed 'in order of achievement', from sitting on a Dunnock's egg in 1947 to being asked if there was 'anything about' half way up a mountain in northern Thailand in 1980. In between, he trod the familiar path of his contemporaries in really getting to know his local birds well, before gradually travelling farther afield to the meccas of British birding in the 1950s and 1960s—Cley, Dungeness, Minsmere, the Solway, and Fair Isle. As with many of his generation, this solid groundwork ensured that he has never lost the touch for quick, accurate field identification, even when his business commitments keep him out of the field for weeks at a time.

Business for Bill is, of course, show business. 'The Goodies' are his foremost activity, with an enormous following worldwide, occupying two large chunks of each year in first writing and secondly filming. The latter, whenever possible, is arranged in a good birding area, Portland being a favourite. In between come other TV series and films, records, gigs (Bill plays several musical instruments), the occasional commercial, and even charity sports events. From this hectic life, he escapes to the relative tranquility of birding, which offers him a totally different atmosphere, and clearly a very welcome break.

Instead of relaxing, however, he treats birding as yet another challenge. And with the bit between his teeth he can be quite alarming. He is the only person I know who is not only awake at the first alarm of the alarm, but is actually up, dressed, 'washed', and wisecracking his way out into the field in less than one minute. I've seen it happen—or rather, heard it happen. Bill is very scathing about any insistence on such 'rituals' as a cup of coffee or a mouthful of food before facing the rigours of the field. He also walks very quickly, despite his little legs, and it's difficult to keep up with him—even for me.

One certain advantage of birding is to allow him to relax away from his fans. It's extraordinary how instantly he is recognised. On boats, trains and planes, in airports, pubs and clubs, he cannot escape—twitched en route to Ireland by an Australian girl, who had seen him on Australian television; on the steps of the Taj Mahal by an Indian, who just happened to be there on holiday from Blackburn; even by a Chinaman in the streets of Kathmandu. He takes it all in good humour, even when an unknown blonde rushes up and kisses him ('You've made an old man very happy . . .'). but he appreciates it when it stops for a couple of weeks.

The VIP treatment can be a tonic, however, especially to his companions (except when they are taken to be the other Goodies). A magic carpet of hospitality, friendship and respect carries you off to havens of privilege and exclusiveness. Heady stuff, but it's all kept well in perspective; one of the sincerest compliments paid to Bill was from a couple of birders who liked him 'because he's so ordinary'. He would approve.

Bill Oddie's *Little Black Bird Book* has ensured him a place in ornithological folklore, about which, of course, he wrote. He said all the things many of us have always wanted to, but far more eloquently and amusingly. It made many more people aware of the appeal and sheer fun of birding, and not many can claim to have done that. The book, his writing, and interviews in

the press and on TV and radio, all help to keep the subject in the public eye. His positions on the Council of the RSPB and as President of the Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory are further indications of a more serious side to his enthusiasm.

As a birding companion—if you can keep up with him—Bill is stimulating, amusing and very knowledgeable. As an ambassador for birding, he has few rivals.

B. A. E. MARR

Mystery photographs

75 This bird was, no doubt, instantly identified by most readers. Even a photograph gives the impression, from its bearing and proportions, that this is a rather large wader. Straight bill and long legs (judging from the tibia) rule out several species, and the godwits *Limosa* are safely eliminated by the copious and close white fringes on the lesser coverts and spots and notches on the edges of the rest of the coverts and tertials. Indeed, this spotting, the straight bill with a hint of a downward kink at the tip and the bold head pattern leave Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus* as the only option available. This is a wader of great elegance, like many others somehow combining an appearance of slim delicacy with a rather broad, rounded body. A little larger than the Redshank *T. totanus*, which is also shorter in bill and leg, it is rather more solidly built than the Greenshank *T. nebularia*, which has a thicker, fractionally upcurved bill. Both these species may show a similar head pattern, but in far less contrasted form—the plain grey crown almost devoid of streaks, white eye-ring, broad white supercilium (really a supra-loral patch, only dimly continued behind the eye) and broad black band across the lores from bill to eye form a more striking head pattern on Spotted Redshank than either of these, or even the smaller Lesser Yellowlegs *T. flavipes*. The Wood Sandpiper *T. glareola* has a much thinner dark streak across the lores, a closely streaked crown and different wing-covert spotting, as well as a much shorter bill. Some Long-billed Dowitchers *Limnodromus scolopaceus* have a striking pale supercilium, but are





57. Mystery photograph 76. Identify the species. Answer next month

longer and heavier in the bill, shorter in the leg and quite differently marked above. Colour, of course, would reveal bright red legs and a red streak along the lower mandible, ruling out all but Redshank (*Ruffs* *Philomachus pugnax* have shorter bills, with no red, and plainer heads, even if the legs happen to be red). The grey, pale-edged scapular feathers are fresh, winter ones replacing the juvenile feathers (which still remain, grey with dark bars and white spots on their edges, on the wings). A few flank bars also remain, but the pale grey and glistening white underparts are already largely into first-winter. Juveniles in the autumn, the most difficult to distinguish perhaps, are much browner below, with close brown barring all over (whereas Redshanks are whiter on the belly). The closely barred tail and uppertail-coverts look dark in flight, leaving the rump and back standing out as a striking central white patch. The flight shape may be long and slim, with trailing legs, or strangely short and snipe-like, with the legs tucked forward out of sight (see *Brit. Birds* 76: 136-137). Short, monosyllabic yelps may come from birds flushed in autumn, but the usual flight call is highly distinctive and most useful: a loud, sharp disyllable, lacking the musical brilliance of Redshank and Greenshank, but clearly enunciated and hard-edged: 'tchu-wit'. Immaculate black spring adults are a rare treat in Britain, though many late-summer groups contain nearly new (more often badly shop-soiled) specimens; winter birds are clean grey and sparkling white, leaving the brown juveniles—poorly treated in the guides—to be overlooked by most beginners unless they take flight. All are lively, deep-wading, snaky-necked, extrovert characters when in pursuit of small fish, splashing about, diving in and bouncing back out like corks, and dashing around in a way which Greenshanks often, but Redshanks rarely, manage to emulate. This bird was photographed by J. B. & S. Bottomley in Cornwall in early November 1969.

R. A. HUME

Product reports

Items included in this feature have been submitted by the manufacturers or their agents. The reviews are the personal opinions of the reviewers; they are not the result of technical tests, but are assessments made after use in appropriate conditions (e.g. in the field). Neither *British Birds* nor the individual reviewers can accept responsibility for any adverse consequences of opinions stated, and items are accepted for review on this understanding. We aim, however, to be helpful both to our readers and to the manufacturers of goods used by birdwatchers. Eds

Optolyth 30 × 75GA prismatic telescope

When it first appeared, the Optolyth 30 × 75GA telescope was greeted with smiles of amused curiosity—the unfamiliar dumpy shape and the green rubber armouring made it look more like a vacuum-flask than a telescope—but it has now become a familiar part of the birding scene.

Early models had two major faults. First, there was a tendency for the tripod-bush to break off from the barrel if a sharp knock was sustained by the mounted telescope. Secondly, it would not focus down to close ranges. The first fault has been totally eliminated by stronger design, and the distributor informs us that the latest model focuses down to 10m. In common with other telescopes, it is not very dust- or weatherproof: I cover mine completely with a plastic bag when it is raining.

Its popularity, in spite of these failings and its rather high price (currently about £197), speaks volumes for its optical excellence. It was originally designed for deerstalking, so light-gathering in dull or dusk conditions was of prime importance, achieved by its 75mm excellent objective lens. After other telescopes have been put away, Optolyths are likely still to be in action. There is also a brilliant image in normal daylight, and image definition is second to none, fading only slightly at the extreme edges of the field of view. The Optolyth 30 × 75GA does have a massive field of view: 120 feet at 1,000 yards (40m at 1,000m); most other telescopes on 30× have 20% or 30% less. A wide field has obvious advantages in general use, but it comes into its own during sea-watches (for effective scanning or for instant pick-up of binocular-spotted ‘blips’) or when following a bird in flight.

Those birdwatchers who prefer a zoom or variable-magnification telescope will not want the Optolyth 30 × 75GA. Moving up to an increased power does not necessarily, however, reveal more detail: while the image becomes larger, definition does not improve commensurately. An optically perfect 30× fixed magnification can be more effective for seeing more detail than complex zooming mechanisms which reduce image-brilliance and width of field.

The Optolyth 30 × 75GA weighs a manageable 1.2kg. For the benefit of spectacle-wearers, it has a rollable eyecup (which, however, is prone to split and, indeed, is not fully effective, as it cuts the field of view by about 10%); I prefer to use mine with spectacles raised. The latest design of the leather carrying-case is strong, and has a sensible buckle-and-strap fastening. The distinctive green rubber armouring is very practical, saving many knocks and chips.

Despite its general excellence, there could be considerable design improvements (in order of importance): better weatherproofing; extendable rainshield-tube for the objective lens (this would also make the telescope longer for the non-tripod user who lies back and rests the scope on his knee), and improved efficacy—and strength—of the spectacle-wearers' rollable eyecup. In my view, it would then be perfect as a birders' scope.

P. J. GRANT

Notes

Red-necked Grebe making nest-building movements

in winter On 22nd November 1979, at Chouet Bay, Guernsey, I saw a Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena* feeding in company with a Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*. After ten minutes the two moved 90m apart, and the grebe climbed on top of a rock covered in bladder wrack *Fucus vesiculosus* standing 0.5m above the surface of the water. The grebe then settled down and, using its bill, arranged the wrack around itself in the form of a nest; after five minutes, it climbed down and started to swim around the rock in an agitated manner. During frequent winter observations of the five commoner grebe species, I have never seen this or similar behaviour, and can find no reference to it in the recent literature.

E. J. DAVIS

Twinnings, Le Bourg, Forest, Guernsey, Channel Islands



Derek Goodwin has commented as follows: 'Many birds may respond with nesting movements if they by chance find themselves in a place, or on a substrate, that supplies the right stimuli.' Ebs

Buzzard feeding on dung beetles Analysis of pellets of Buzzards *Buteo buteo* has shown that beetles (Coleoptera) are eaten in large numbers (Dare 1961; Davis & Saunders 1965). Observations on ground feeding by Buzzards (Hayman 1968) are quoted by Tubbs (1974) and Brown (1976), but no quantitative data are given. During 18.35-19.05 GMT on 31st August 1979, near Wiveliscombe, Somerset, I recorded the following using 10 × 50 binoculars at a distance of 50-70m in sunny, calm weather. A Buzzard perched on a telegraph pole for four minutes, turning its head and looking at the ground; it then flew down, landed, picked up a large black beetle, raised its head, momentarily crushed the insect in the tips of its mandibles and swallowed it. It remained standing, hunched over its legs in a vertical position, and scanned the ground for three minutes. Quickly running eight paces to its right, its body now held horizontally, it made a second capture with its beak. During 27 minutes, the Buzzard made 38 pecking movements (1.41 per minute), with 36 of which it captured large black beetles. It walked a total of 233 paces (8.6 paces per minute), with a mean rate of 6.1

per peck and 6.5 per capture. During the period, the raptor made captures of one per minute on eight occasions (32% of time), two per minute seven times (28%), and three or four per minute twice (16%). It most frequently made short runs (sometimes including sideways hops) of six to eight paces (41% of all captures), or walked two to four paces (35%); longer runs of 10-12 paces were infrequent (19%). When the capture rate was one item per minute the mean distance walked was 7.5 paces, but at four items per minute only four paces: suggesting local aggregations in prey distribution. When the Buzzard left, I briefly examined a strip of pasture, about 1m wide and 20m long, in the area where it had been feeding; I found six dung beetles *Typhaeus typhoeus* (0.3 per m²), and two more flew overhead. The food requirements of a Buzzard are 140g per day (Dare 1961). The average weight of the six beetles was 0.8g. The Buzzard, therefore, obtained 28.8g in 27 minutes, about 20% of its required daily intake (although the calorific value is unknown).

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Spotted Redshanks flying with legs retracted During the severe weather at the beginning of 1963, L. P. Alder was struck by the large number of waders and gulls which were flying with their legs tucked forward into their body feathers instead of trailing out behind (*Brit. Birds* 56: 219-220). He noted that the outlines of Redshanks *Tringa totanus* 'were so shortened as a result that they had quite a puzzling appearance'.

He also mentioned similar behaviour by Spotted Redshanks *T. erythropus*, and one which I saw flying in this way at fairly long range at West Thurrock, Essex, in the winter of 1973/74 was initially identified as a dowitcher *Limnodromus*: later, I saw it where it landed and fortunately the true identity was established. Unaware that Spotted Redshanks might fly like this, I had been fooled by the dowitcher-like combination of white, 'slit-like' rump-and-back patch, pale trailing edge on the inner upperwing, stocky build, lack of trailing legs, and long bill (the actually shorter and much finer proportions of the latter compared with that of a real dowitcher were not evident and, in any case, the other features were enough to 'identify' the bird).

Since then, in autumn at Dungeness, Kent, I have seen three individuals among a flock of Spotted Redshanks flying in this way, and I have heard of other instances not associated with cold weather, notably from R. F. Porter, who has seen Spotted Redshanks flying with legs retracted during autumn passage at Thorney Island, West Sussex, 'so commonly that I stopped noting it in 1963'. Another possible source of confusion could be the species' perhaps unfamiliar 'conversational' or contact notes (uttered in flight or when feeding) resembling the rather quiet, low-pitched, subdued quack-like *uck* or *oock* described by J. H. Taverner (*Brit. Birds* 59: 152), quite unlike **its** familiar, sharp *chuit*.

The purpose of this note is to advertise this behaviour as a possible pitfall in dowitcher identification when distant flight views are involved. Some recent claims submitted to the Rarities Committee have not been accepted because some members acknowledge the possible risk, however slight,

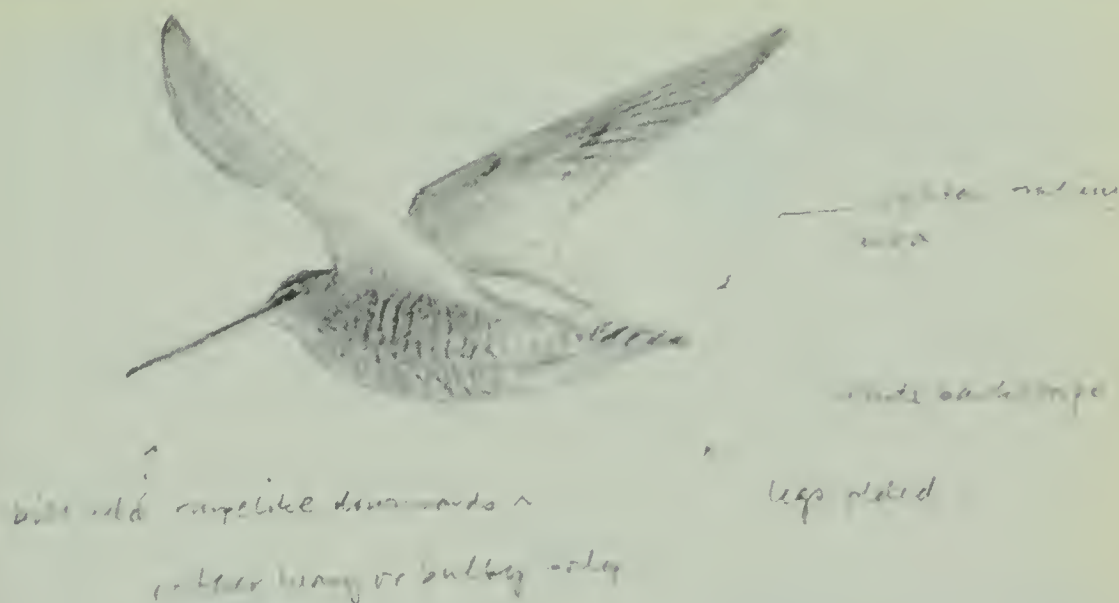


Fig. 1. Juvenile Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus* flying with legs retracted, Sweden, autumn 1982. Note: bill held Snipe-like downwards; rather heavy or bulby body; legs folded; white backstripe; lighter trailing area to wing (Lars Jonsson)

involving a Spotted Redshank flying with legs retracted. It should be stated that other members of the Committee believe equally strongly that such a mistake would not be made by experienced observers.

POSTSCRIPT Since I wrote the above, Lars Jonsson has told me that he has regularly noted this behaviour in Sweden, and his field sketch (fig. 1) of a Spotted Redshank flying with legs retracted illustrates perfectly the dowitcher-like impression. He has also seen Greenshanks *T. nebularia* flying in this way, and at the beginning of September 1982, near Falsterbo, Sweden, he drew my attention and that of others to flocks of Ruffs *Philomachus pugnax* fighting to roost, a large proportion of which were flying with their legs tucked forward. They were also not flying in their usual languorous fashion, but fast and direct, so that the total impression (apart from the longer head-and-neck projection) recalled a Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria* rather than a Ruff. It would seem likely that this behaviour is common to many wader species, and that, as well as heat-retention in cold weather, its purpose probably involves better streamlining on long migrational or roosting flights. I am most grateful to LJ for permission to use his sketch in this note.

P. J. GRANT

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Head-shapes and postures of Slender-billed and Black-headed Gulls

Whilst making detailed drawings of first-winter Slender-billed *Larus genei* and Black-headed Gulls *L. ridibundus* at Porto Lagos, Greece, on 21st August 1979, I noted the following points which, although minor, may be a helpful addition to the wealth of excellent information contained in P. J. Grant's paper (*Brit. Birds* 71: 153-164).

The acute angle which an imaginary line would make if drawn through the feather extremities of upper and lower mandibles of Slender-billed

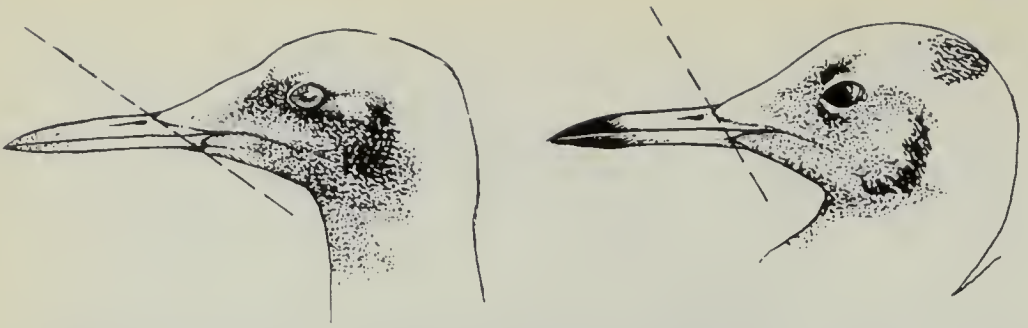


Fig. 1. Illustration, made from detailed field sketches, of the angles of upper and lower mandible feathering on Slender-billed *Larus genei* and Black-headed Gulls *L. ridibundus* at Porto Lagos, Greece, August 1979 (Frederick J. Watson)



Fig. 2. Comparative diagrams of posture and structure frequently demonstrated by Slender-billed *Larus genei* (left) and Black-headed Gulls *L. ridibundus* (Frederick J. Watson)

Gulls, compared with the angle made by a similar line applied to Black-headed Gulls helped me to realise more easily the precise difference in head-shape between the two species (fig. 1).

I also noted that Black-headed Gulls tend to have a 'deeper' belly and vent feathering, giving a 'pot-bellied' effect, and, frequently, a more upright stance than Slender-billed (fig. 2).

FREDERICK J. WATSON

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Lesser Black-backed Gull completely submerging while plunge-diving On 30th March 1977, an adult Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus* was seen to plunge-dive into a fairly calm freshwater pool 60-70cm deep adjoining Airthrey Loch, Stirlingshire. It had been circling over the pool in typical searching flight when it suddenly braked, hovered briefly 3-4m above the surface and then plunged bill-first, holding its wings towards its body, but not completely closed, as it entered the water. The gull submerged totally from the momentum of the dive and remained under for two or three seconds. It surfaced with a medium-sized fish in its bill, rose immediately from the water holding the prey by the head, and carried it about 20m to a sloping grassy bank. The fish was not seen to struggle and, as subsequent examination proved, was already dead when taken by the gull. Nevertheless, on landing on the bank, the gull dealt one hard blow to

the fish with its bill, before picking lightly at it as though starting to feed. When disturbed, it abandoned the fish. This was examined more closely and found to be a rainbow trout *Salmo gairdneri*, 29cm long and weighing 265g: it did not appear diseased, but had evidently been dead for 24-48 hours, having cloudy but intact eyes and a gathering of body mucus around the head. This latter feature, together with a certain amount of mud on the head, suggested that, before being taken by the gull, the fish had been standing in a near-vertical position in the pool with its head slightly buried in the bottom sediment; there would therefore be 30-40cm of water above the fish, and a full 60cm through which the gull would have had to dive in order to grasp it by the head, this probably necessitating its complete immersion. Although plunge-diving for fish near the surface is a well-known feeding method of gulls, this normally involves only partial submersion (Haviland 1915, Smith 1942, Simmons 1972). Complete submersion on plunge-diving has been recorded for the Black-headed Gull *L. ridibundus* (Cameron 1942, Nielson 1954), and almost complete submersion for the Common Gull *L. canus* (Bird & Harper 1949), but we can find no reference in the literature to such behaviour by the Lesser Black-backed Gull.

The Handbook lists only one instance of Lesser Black-backed Gulls diving from the air, but Brown (1967) recorded fish as the main constituent in 52% of feeds brought to the female in courtship feeding (mainly small cod *Gadus*, small flatfish and sprats *Sprattus sprattus*), presumably mostly caught by this method; Harris (1965) also reported a prevalence of live food (rather than fish-waste and garbage), including numerous fish, in the diet of Lesser Black-backed Gulls. These authors concluded that this species tends to feed more on the shore and at sea than does the Herring Gull *L. argentatus*.

In view of the evidence that Lesser Black-backed Gulls commonly feed over water, it is surprising that complete submersion on plunge-diving does not seem to have been previously recorded for this species.

M. DAVIES and D. M. BRYANT

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Leg-exposure by Bee-eaters and other species During June 1978, while observing the foraging behaviour of Bee-eaters *Merops apiaster* in south-western Spain, I noticed that many flew with their legs hanging down. Regular observation throughout the day near a nesting colony at El Rocio, on the border of the Marismas de Guadalquivir, showed that the habit was commonest around midday. On three consecutive days, leg-trailing was first noted at 10.00, 10.00 and 10.20 GMT, respectively, and rapidly became frequent among samples of individuals, where each was watched for at least 15 seconds. On one day, between 11.00 and 12.00 hours, when the shade temperature was 31°C, a maximum of 21 (91%) of 23 Bee-eaters observed were trailing their legs for two to 15 or more seconds each. All Bee-eaters I watched in detail were feeding aerially, taking mainly dragonflies (Odonata), beetles (Coleoptera) and bees and wasps (Hymenoptera), often at more than 30m above the ground. An aerodynamic function such as braking or steering with the feet (Pennycuik 1972) can probably be discounted, because the Bee-eaters commonly wing-flapped and leg-trailed

simultaneously, and retracted their legs when making a sharp turn. It seems likely that leg-trailing is a thermoregulatory device, increasing the rate of heat dissipation under conditions of high thermal radiation, high ambient temperature (shade temperatures ranged from 28.5°C to 31°C between 11.00 and 15.00 hours) and probably high humidity. That the habit was commonest around midday (when thermal radiation is at a maximum), rather than during the afternoon (when ambient temperature and humidity were still high), suggests that the former is a main factor causing heat stress. The capacity of birds to lose heat through their legs has been demonstrated by Steen & Steen (1965), and discussed by Tucker (1968), although the only previous quantitative field observations have concerned two hirundines in southern Africa (Frost & Siegfried 1975). Radiant heat stress was also considered to be a problem for Mangrove Swallows *Iridoprocne albilinea* in Central America (Ricklefs 1971).

In the study area, I noted leg-trailing on one or two occasions among four other species: Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*, Black Kite *Milvus migrans*, Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* and Swallow *Hirundo rustica*, species which fly for many hours while hunting and which might be expected to experience heat stress problems. As the three raptor species commonly hunted near the ground, it is difficult to exclude leg-trailing either as an aid to manoeuvring or a preparation for pouncing on prey; in all three, however, records of leg-trailing occurred at peak times for Bee-eaters, so a thermoregulatory function for leg-exposure in flight cannot be dismissed lightly. Swallows often sought shade between 12.00 and 14.00 hours, either by perching in trees or under bridges or culverts, and it was among small groups feeding nearby at the same time that I twice saw leg-trailing. In East Africa also, I have four times seen Swallows and Red-rumped Swallows *H. daurica* trailing their legs, all between 10.40 and 13.00 hours. It seems that aerial feeders, which are usually unable to feed and seek shade simultaneously, are more prone to heat stress than many other birds, especially when they are nesting (as were the Bee-eaters and Swallows in Spain), and may need to search for food throughout the day.

I should like to thank Dr J. Castroviejo and Dr C. Herrera of the Estación Biológica de Doñana for their generous help, and the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland for financial support.

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Dummy nest-foundation pads of Garden Warbler While cocks' nests are not unusual in certain species of *Sylvia*, my observations of male Garden

Warblers *S. borin* in this respect seem to warrant mention. During the spring of 1978, in northeast Shropshire, five male Garden Warblers held clearly defined territories and between them produced at least 13 (3, 2, 2, 5 and 1, respectively) wispy dried grass accumulations sited typically in brambles *Rubus*, larch *Larix* plantations and rhododendron *Rhododendron ponticum* thickets. Each, while somewhat random in appearance, seemed destined for adoption by a female as a foundation for a proper nest. By late June, young a few days out of the nest, accompanied by adults, confirmed breeding, but none of the 13 wispy nest-pads in the five territories had been developed into a complete nest. From 11th May 1979, three male Garden Warblers held territories: *A* in a young larch plantation, *B* in a rhododendron plot, and *C* in another larch nursery (two territories were similarly occupied in 1978); each territory was about one-and-a-half times the size of a tennis court. I located nine of the wispy pads in territory *A*, a similar number in *B* and a single example in *C*; subsequently, a further three were discovered in territory *B*, giving a grand total in the three territories of 22. As in 1978 (and in a retrospective case in the 1960s), *B* proved the case of outstanding interest: the actual nest was discovered later in the year in a low outer forked branch of a rhododendron on one side of a lane, and in a rhododendron plot on the opposite side 12 dried grass pads were found in typical Garden Warbler situations, quite separate from the actual territory. The impression was of 12 'dummy' pads within a dummy territory. In late November 1979, I found clear confirmation of nesting by bird *A*, well away in the plantation (and without using any of the nine grass pads), but (unlike in *B*) not distinctly separated from the general boundaries of the territory. In *A*, the possibility of dummies, at least as far as nest-foundation pads goes (though perhaps not for territory as in *B*), appears still to hold. Bird *C* also nested in a larch nursery plantation, where the male had, as in case *A*, used two high trees as regular song posts on the opposite side of a footpath from the nest-site; I found only one pad in this location. At the end of the 1978 and 1979 breeding seasons, I collected 13 and 22 pads respectively; in two or three instances, some attempt had been made to fashion the accumulated grasses into a rough shallow cup, but otherwise, for the most part, the wispy heaps were rather like a random piling of criss-cross stems. That these pads are of some significance to the male Garden Warbler may be shown by the fact that a male I watched, from within the interior of fine rhododendron in territory *B*, perched low down among the outer pendant branches and, in full song, tugged at and gathered in several dried strands of cleavers *Galium aparine* which it purposefully bunched into a rough pad in a suitable crotch, returning several times during about 20 minutes to continue the work.

Looking through earlier notes, I came upon a similar instance in the same district in the 1950s: the male gathered several grass pads on one side of a road in a shrubby/bramble patch, but the nest was sited on the opposite side of the road about 2-2½ m up in the crown of an open bramble.

The true function of these dummy pads is unclear. An 'intentional' ploy or subtle deception to sidetrack potential predators (known to the bird?) may be a possible explanation; alternatively, sheer nuptial play or exu-

berance (perhaps continuing after completion of the nest proper) may explain all the male's effort, which would seem to receive scant, if any, attention from the female.

A. S. NORRIS

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'Body-brushing' by Nuthatches In 1979, while studying a pair of Nuthatches *Sitta europaea* nesting in an old apple tree *Malus* in my parents' garden at Cossington, Leicestershire, I noted the following behaviour not apparently recorded before. At 08.43 GMT on 6th May, on a branch 2½ m from the ground and 1½ m above the natural nest-hole, the male and female began the rhythmic 'head-snaking' which often precedes copulation: after several seconds, the male went up the gently sloping branch, paused and then backed down to the female so that both were resting head-to-tail across the branch in close body contact; after a short pause, he began to move around her in a circular motion, 'brushing' her body with his, moving under her fanned tail, along her left flank, under her upstretched neck and then along her right flank, maintaining body contact throughout. This clockwise motion continued for three complete turns made in one unbroken movement, and ended with the male returning to his original position before he had backed down to his mate. That some pressure was exerted during this sequence is suggested by the fact that the female ended up several centimetres down the branch from her original position. At 08.14 GMT on 7th May, almost identical behaviour occurred on a branch level with the first floor window from which I was observing on each occasion. This time, it was preceded by the male's slow, repeated single-note whistle, leading into the head-snaking, and then the behaviour described above; six minutes later, the male 'courtship-fed' his mate on the same branch. At 07.38 on 20th May, further body-brushing was observed on a pear tree *Pyrus* about 10 m from the nest-tree, on a horizontal branch about 7 m from the ground. This branch was much narrower than the two used previously (12 cm in diameter as opposed to 18-20 cm), which may account for the variations in the behaviour on this occasion: no head-snaking was observed; after taking up the head-to-tail position across the branch, the male brushed past the female's spread tail and moved to about a body-length away from her along the branch; he paused for two or three seconds, turned around and brushed past her front to a similar position facing to the opposite direction; after pausing there motionless again for two or three seconds, he turned and repeated the sequence; at the completion of this second pass, the female's tail feathers closed abruptly and the sequence ended. At 07.40 hours, both flew off together, and six minutes later the male courtship-fed his mate on the nest-tree.

Since it is preceded by head-snaking, which also precedes mating, body-brushing is clearly a closely related activity, although distinct from it. Evidence that this was not just an abortive mating is suggested by the fact that this pair successfully mated twice on 6th May, on the same branch as body-brushing took place and just over one hour before it (07.28): on that occasion, the head-snaking went directly into mating. This behaviour may

further and maintain the pair-bond, and could be connected with the display of the male's chestnut flanks. Unfortunately, on the first occasion I was looking down on the birds, and on the second the flanks were partially obscured by leaves and blossom, but my impression was that the flanks, although visible, were no more on display than at other times during nest-building and food-searching.

G. M. YATES

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Seventy-five years ago...

'MONTAGU'S HARRIER *Circus cineraceus* [*C. pygargus*] NESTING RECORDS.—*Northumberland*.—A female shot. . . *Yorkshire*.—A nest with two eggs was found. . . but the female was caught on the nest. . . *Notts*.—A male shot. . . probably had a female sitting. . . *North Wales*.—A pair nested. . . both birds were shot. . . *Cambs*.—Two pairs bred in the Fens. . . and one nest was taken. . . *Norfolk*.—Try to rear their young every year, but the nest is taken or the old birds shot. . . *Sussex*.—Eggs were laid in East Sussex, but birds and nest were destroyed. In 1903 a similar fate attended a pair at the same place. . .'

'THE PRESERVATION OF RARE BRITISH BREEDING BIRDS. The Watchers' Fund of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds is in need of contributions.' (*Brit. Birds* 1: 317, 323, March 1908)

Letters

Small Golden Plovers A. Pym's excellent paper on the identification of Lesser Golden Plovers *Pluvialis dominica* (*Brit. Birds* 75: 112-124) mentions the occurrences of 'apparent hybrids' in the USSR and Malta. I strongly suspect that such birds also appear in Britain. Since 1977, I have combed through every migrant and wintering flock of Golden Plovers *P. apricaria* that I have met closely. Twice in such groups, near Bubwith and near Howden, North Humberside, on respectively 20th January and 12th October 1980, I have found small birds that initially appeared to be immature Lesser Golden Plovers of the Asiatic race *P. d. fulva*. Both were essentially 'yellow-green' morphs, like their companions, but they showed much of the grace, the rapid gait and the more complex body pattern of the smaller species. Although both possessed neither quite the necessary head pattern, tapering 'rear end' nor (one) the long legs of the full-blooded Lesser Golden Plover, their eventual exposure of clearly pale, if not completely white, wing linings came as a surprise (and lesson).

In my experience, the Asiatic race of the Lesser Golden Plover is much easier to pass over among a crowd of Golden Plovers than the American, and it may well be that the odd Golden Plover does mistake its mate. Whether such unions occur during the lengthy spring courtship (post vagrancy) in Europe or in the area of sympatric breeding (pre vagrancy) in

Siberia is a question that will take a deal of answering. So far, I have not mused on an American cross, though conceivably this could happen (post vagrancy). To my eyes, the odd grey morphs of the Golden Plover are never so small as to excite. Their colours appear simply diluted, in any upperpart plumage.

I take no pleasure in these comments, if for no other reason than that the apparent hybrids have shattered the calm of my quiet, ex car window plover watches!

D. I. M. WALLACE

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Nest photography I found your latest selection for 'Bird Photograph of the Year' (*Brit. Birds* 75: 218-222) very interesting: all the pictures shown were of a very high standard and placing them in order must have been difficult. I feel, however, that I must question the wisdom of placing a nest shot (of the Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus*) in second place. I feel that this can only encourage less responsible people to try to imitate this, with obvious dangers to bird and to habitat. Surely our most unusual species are already under enough pressure without this being added.

I think nest photography now must be under very serious question, and *BB* would do better to encourage flight shots and others away from the nest.

I must make it clear this is not a personal attack on either the photographer (of whose reputation I am aware) nor of *BB*: just the question of the advisability of inadvertently encouraging a practice which could well not be in the best interests of conservation.

ALAN ASH

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We passed this letter to our Photographic Consultants, Dr Richard Chandler and Don Smith, who replied as follows: 'Mr Ash has raised an often discussed point which is not easily resolved. All of us concerned with the welfare of birds realise that there is an inherent risk involved in nest photography, a risk that varies enormously both with the species and with different individuals. The long tradition, and hence tremendous background of experience, of nest photography in Britain clearly demonstrates that responsible photographers constitute only a very slight risk to the success of a breeding bird. Indeed, if a nesting bird deserts—the most likely consequence of careless nest photography—the photographer will not get his pictures! A careful, responsible attitude to nest photography is thus in the interests of bird and photographer alike.

'The risk in nest photography is clearly greatest to uncommon or rare species. In this country, the Nature Conservancy Council issues (or does not issue) permits to those who apply to photograph specially protected birds at or near the nest, and this acts as a brake on the number of persons photographing rare species. It also stops incompetent persons or learners from attempting to photograph rare birds, as applicants are required to satisfy the NCC of their competence and to cite qualified referees. Thus, we believe that there is a place for those who wish to undertake responsible nest photography. Indeed, the educational value of at-the-nest bird-photography has made a great contribution towards conservation through its influence on public opinion.

'In the recent "Bird Photograph of the Year" competition, five of the 21 short-listed pictures were taken at (or near) the nest. That proportion reflects our view of nest photography: that it is not to be condemned, but that there are many interesting, attractive and original bird-photographs which can be obtained away from the nest. There, too, photographers should be circumspect. Tired migrants should not be harried. Similarly, the interests of other bird-watchers should be respected: the bird-photographer who approaches his subject too closely will disturb the bird and also annoy those who wanted merely to watch it. With thought and care, however, the experienced bird-photographer will contribute to ornithology, not detract from it.' Eds

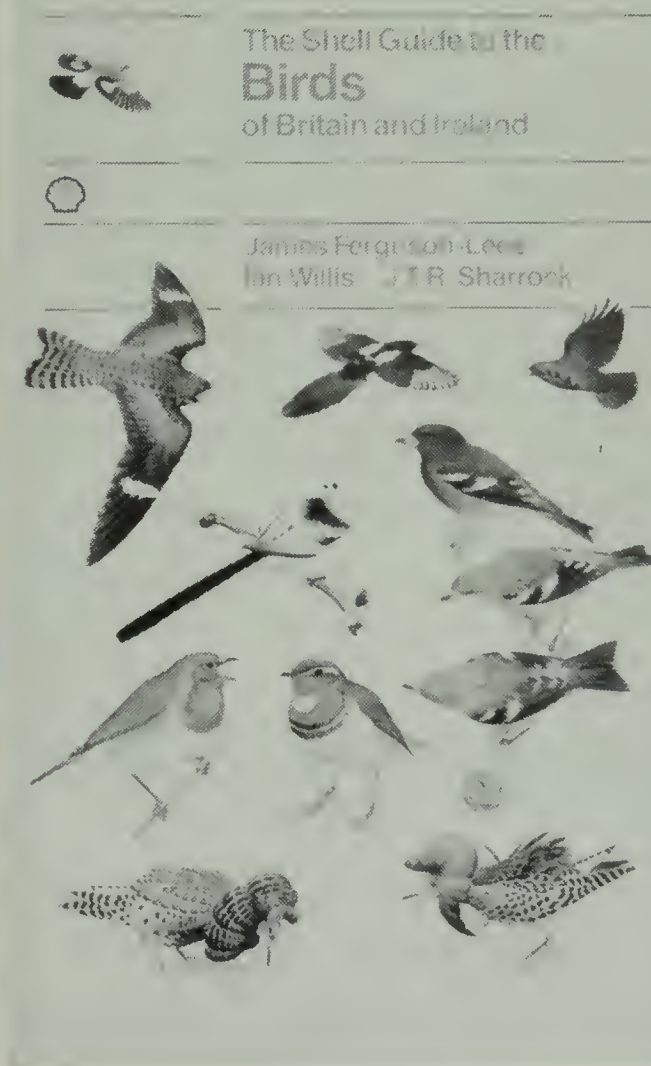
Announcements

'Seabirds: an identification guide' This major new book has been illustrated and written by Peter Harrison. If that name is not yet familiar to you, the reason may be that he has spent most of the past seven years on ships, travelling the world's oceans to collect the first-hand data on which this book is based: Peter Harrison has personally seen all but 30 of the 312 species of the world's seabirds. This handbook, with all 312 species illustrated in colour, will inevitably become the standard work on seabird identification immediately it is published, by Croom Helm Ltd, in May 1983.

We are delighted to have arranged with Croom Helm for *British Birds* subscribers to obtain *Seabirds: an identification guide* at a pre-publication price of £13.45 (instead of the usual £15.95); this special offer is available *only* to *BB* subscribers. Please order *now*, with payment, through British BirdShop (see page vii).

'The Shell Guide to the Birds of Britain and Ireland' This new field

guide, with text by I. J. Ferguson-Lees, paintings by Ian Willis and distribution maps by Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, will be published by Michael Joseph at £7.95 on 11th April. The 144 colour plates illustrate over 1,500 plumages of 488 species. As a *BB* subscriber, you can get your copy post free through British BirdShop (see page vii).



Bird-sound discs and cassettes In response to many requests, we can now again offer the discs of the incomparable *A Field Guide to Bird Songs of Britain and Europe* individually. Please use the order form on page ix.

‘Waders’ by Eric Hosking Due to be published by Michael Joseph on 25th April and obtainable post free to *BB* subscribers through British BirdShop (see page vii). We are very pleased to have arranged an exclusive, pre-publication reduction of £2.00 for *BB* readers: £12.95 instead of £14.95.

‘Unpublished Bird Paintings by George Edward Lodge’ Only 1,000 copies of this book have been printed for the British market. 350 × 266mm, 408 pages, 89 colour plates, published by Michael Joseph in November 1982. A collectors’ book obtainable by *BB* readers post free through British BirdShop (see page vii).

Reduced price for ‘Frontiers’ For a short period only, the publishers, Macmillan London Ltd, have agreed to allow *British Birds* subscribers to purchase *Frontiers of Bird Identification* for £6.70 instead of the usual £8.95. If you have not yet got your copy of this advanced identification guide, order one now, using the form on page vii.

Sealink spring tours of the Channel Islands This spring, Sealink is running three special birdwatching trips to Guernsey, designed to suit *BB* readers. The emphasis is heavily on birds, and a good variety can be expected, including Short-toed Treecreeper, Dartford Warbler, Firecrest, and perhaps scarce migrants such as Red-breasted Flycatcher, or any of a number of unusual species that can turn up in the islands on spring passage. Sealink has agreed to make a small donation to *BB* for every reader who books to go on one of these trips.

The maximum all-inclusive price of £87 covers *all* travel from London and the Home Counties and back (with cabin berth on the outward night crossing), two nights’ dinner plus bed and breakfast in twin room accommodation at La Trelade Hotel, St Martins, two days’ packed lunches, a full day’s tour of Guernsey visiting three or four prime birdwatching sites, a full day on Herm (weather permitting), minibus transport with guide/driver (a local ornithologist), and a free copy of the *Birds of Guernsey* guide by Tim Earl. Parties are limited to 14 persons. The first trip is on 22nd-25th April, and the second on 6th-9th May. The third, on 22nd-25th May, will stay at the Belvoir Farm Hotel, Castel, and only rest-chair accommodation will be available on ship; the price for this tour is £77. (For the 23.00-hours sailing from Portsmouth, participants must catch the 19.50 train from Waterloo; those travelling from outside London and the Home Counties will have to pay a reduced rail fare supplement quoted on request.)

These trips to these attractive islands should prove most enjoyable (VAT-free shopping as a bonus), as well as highly interesting from a

birding angle. As applications will be dealt with on a first-come, first-served basis, we advise readers to book early (stating their preferred dates). Bookings, together with payment of £87 (or £77 for 22nd May departure) (cheques to be made payable to Sealink UK Ltd), should be sent to Harry Tabcart, Room 106, 163 Eversholt Street, London NW1 1BG.

Christmas puzzle There were 42 species in the block of letters set as the Christmas puzzle on page ix in the December 1982 issue. In order of their initial letters, row-by-row, from top left to bottom right, they were: Ruff, Ptarmigan, Serin, Swallow, Wigeon, Hen Harrier, Peregrine, Jay, Blue Tit, Magpie, Robin, Bobolink, Smew, Swift, Snipe, Twite, Eider, Hobby, Tawny Owl, Pheasant, Siskin, Shag, Woodpigeon, Tawny Pipit, Raven, Linnet, Garganey, Knot, Wryneck, King Eider, Gannet, Great Snipe, Coot, Rook, Alpine Swift, Wren, Veery, Golden Pheasant, Teal, Avocet, Crane and Marsh Tit. There was also 'crow', but, according to the rules, only specific names and not group names were allowed. From the total of 582 entries, only 33 were wholly correct: Geoffrey Acklam, Ian J. Andrews, P. G. Appleton, Keith Atkin, Miss Helen Baker, J. A. Braggs, Andy Clements, Alan F. Coles, Dr J. P. Cullen, N. R. Davies, Mark Fletcher, Peter R. Gordon, M. R. Gough, Colin Gould, C. Griffin, T. S. C. Harris, S. G. Hogan, Allen Holmes, David Holmes, Alan Hunter, Chris Janman, P. G. Lausdown, D. E. Munson, Dr David Norman, Michael O'Donnell, Dave Parker, M. J. Pointon, G. H. Rhodes, G. N. Siggins, J. L. Swallow, C. J. Taylor, J. Thorogood, and an anonymous entrant from Aldershot. The winner of the draw on 15th January was Keith Atkin, who will receive as his prize *The 'British Birds' Mystery Photographs Book*, which is due to be published in early autumn 1983.

Request

Birds in Israel For a book on the birds of Israel, being compiled in conjunction with the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel and the Israel Raptor Information Center, reports are needed of observations made at any time, past or present. Information concerning birds observed at Ma'agan Michael and Eilat is especially sought. Any ornithologist who supplies records which are used in this work will be mentioned in the book. Please give details of species, numbers, date, time and location of observation and supply your full name and address. Information should be sent to Hadoram Shirihi, PO Box 22, Hertzelia 46 100, Israel.

News and comment

Robin Prytherch and Mike Everett

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

Montagu's Harriers In three years, the Lorraine (France) population of Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* has quadrupled: in 1981 a count revealed 150 pairs and at the end of the season an astonishing 350 young were estimated to be flying. This amazing

figure is the equivalent of the combined Montagu's Harrier populations of Belgium, Denmark, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland! The success is due to the action of WWF France and the Fonds d'Intervention pour les Rapaces (FIR) to save the harriers' nesting area, which was seriously threatened by intensive agriculture, drainage for construction and the creation of fishing ponds. In 1980, WWF and FIR bought or rented more than 50 ha of suitable ground. (*WWF News*: 18, July/August 1982, per Council of Europe *Newsletter*: 82-8/9.)

Bird song recordings at Moscow During the XVIII International Ornithological Congress in August, one British contribution was the organising of sessions devoted to the popular presentation of bird song: a new congress feature. On three evenings, for about an hour, tapes were played. The idea was that two ornithologists from each zoogeographical region chose between them the ten most musical songsters of their region, but in the event not all contributors fully responded to the concept. Either that, or beauty is in the ear of the beholder. Boris Veprintsev, for example, chose for his five from the Palearctic not only Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia*, Blue Whistling Thrush *Myophonus caeruleus* and White's Thrush *Zoothera dauma*, but also Knot *Calidris canutus* and Black-billed Capercaillie *Tetrao parvirostris*! Names do not necessarily indicate the talents of the bearers, but a glance at the lists does reveal obvious choices: Song Sparrow *Zonotrichia melodia* (Nearctic), Chorister Robin-chat *Cossypha dichroa* (Afro-tropical), Chanting Scrub-wren *Crateroscelis murina* (Australasian) and Musician Wren *Cyphorhinus arada* (Neotropical). Some 40-50 people attended each of the sessions, more than half of them being from the Socialist countries. They were provided with full notes in English and Russian prepared by Ron Kettle and Michael Wilson (copies available, see below).

A visit to the Library of Wildlife Sounds of the USSR Academy of Sciences at Puschino-Oka, two hours' drive south of Moscow, was made by about 80 people. A valuable round-table discussion was held mainly on the technical aspects of recording. Jeffery Boswall gave an outline history of bird sound recording in the Soviet Union; John Burton spoke of the BBC's wildlife sound archive and Fred Jüssi introduced some of his Estonian stereo recordings. Two films made

during sound recording expeditions were shown, one on the Siberian Spruce Grouse *Falcipennis falcipennis*, the second on the Little Whimbrel *Numenius minutus*. Both species create sounds instrumentally as well as vocally: the grouse fans its tail making a buzzing noise; the curlew dives snipe-like through the sky. A painting of the Little Whimbrel adorns the sleeve of one of three bird-voice LPs published in time for the Congress by Melodia, the All-Union Studio of Disc Recording. These records were avidly purchased by visitors to Puschino. They are the first three in a projected series of 25 LPs under the title *A Sound Guide to the Birds of the Soviet Union*. The compiler is Prof. Boris N. Veprintsev (the scientific curator of the library) and the work is intended to accompany the new Soviet handbook to be edited by V. D. Ilychev and V. R. Flint. Sixty-five species of diver and wader give voice from the three discs, among them the Green-throated Diver *Gavia arctica viridigularis* (listed as *G. pacifica* on the sleeve), the Spoon-billed Sandpiper *Eurynorhynchus pygmeus* and the Ibisbill *Ibidorhyncha struthersii*. A copy of the full list of delegates and the round-table discussion agenda has been deposited with the British Library of Wildlife Sounds. BLOWS published an anthology of reprints under the title *Wildlife Sound Recording in the Soviet Union: history, reviews, discography*, which can be obtained (as can the notes on bird songs) from Ron Kettle, 29 Exhibition Road, London SW7 2AS. (*Contributed by Jeffery Boswall*)

The new British Rail The brief note in this feature last October (*Brit. Birds* 75: 475) concerning 'the discovery' of *Rallus brittanicus* Boswall prompted John Redshaw to send us his description which he hopes is adequate for acceptance! 'FIELD NOTES Variable short or long bill, yellow. Dark or light "windows" along two-tone blue flanks diagnostic. Footprint confirms field notes that species does not know whether it is coming or going. Prolific yellow-cheeked morph is fast moving, and speeds of 125 mph are regularly recorded. Species appears to suffer from its own indecision, and occasionally becomes dormant. HABITAT Catholic in taste, but all habitats essentially linear. VOICE Variable calls, usually a form of "too-ee" or "daah-daa", with emphasis on first syllable. BREEDING Reproduction takes place at widely spaced locations, all in industrial areas. DISTRIBUTION Widespread, but declining in rural areas.' Is this yet another endangered species?



58. YOUNG ORNITHOLOGISTS OF 1982: Adam Rowlands and Shona Glover with Peter Holden (YOC National Organiser) and JTRS (*Studio Neill*)

Young Ornithologists of the Year The presentation of the awards to the 'Young Ornithologists of 1982' was made by Dr J. T. R. Sharrock at The Lodge on 5th January. Adam Rowlands (14) and Shona Glover (12) also met several YOC and RSPB staff members, including RSPB Director, Ian Prestt, and then spent the afternoon bird-watching near Sandy (plate 58). The 1983 competition will again be sponsored by *British Birds*, and the rules will be published in the YOC magazine *Bird Life*.

Get away to Shetland The Shetland Tourist Organisation has recently published an attractive, illustrated, colour leaflet which is aimed 'specifically at the ornithology market'. It wants to attract not only serious students, but also to encourage holiday visitors to discover Shetland's abundant bird-life. The leaflet emphasises the wild and natural beauty of the islands, the spectacular seabird breeding cliffs and mentions about 30 species the birdwatcher is likely to see. Perhaps too much attention is given to some of the rare breeders (e.g. Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*); even so, surely it is good that birds are now promoted as a tourist attraction: an asset being realised.

Bats need friends Bird populations fluctuate widely; some increase, whilst others decrease. No doubt populations of bats would change similarly under 'normal' conditions, but, at present, bat populations are in decline. Even the common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* has almost halved its numbers in the last three years. The reasons for the decline are many, including loss of roosts, loss of food and feeding grounds, pollution and weather, but the greatest single threat to bats is remedial timber treatment in buildings. Most people are probably unaware of bats roosting in their houses (birdwatchers being exceptions, we hope). But are you familiar with bats and the law? From last September, all wild bats in Britain were protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and to mark this excellent move the Nature Conservancy Council has published an equally excellent booklet *Focus on Bats: their conservation and the law*. It would be very useful to have one to hand, as it gives hints on how to encourage bats to your house. Single copies of the booklet are available free of charge on receipt of a 9" x 6" stamped (12½p) addressed envelope, from The Nature Conservancy Council, Attingham Park, Shrewsbury SY4 4TW.

Southwest get-together The Chew Valley Ringing Station is organising another one-day conference for birdwatchers and ringers in the southwest. It will be held later this month, on Saturday 26th March 1983 at the Conygre Hall, Timsbury, near Bath, Avon, from 10.00 to 18.00 hours. The programme includes talks on Pied Flycatchers, birds of prey in Avon, Bristol's rooftop-nesting gulls, ringing activities in Gloucestershire, bird movements on Steep Holm, and an ornithological trip to the Falkland Islands. There will also be sales of items such as ringing equipment, and a *BB* mystery photograph competition. The cost will be £7.50 per person (incl. lunch). Booking forms are available (SAE please) from Dorian Bullery, 36 Carrington Road, Ashton, Bristol BS3 2AG.

BTO at Swanwick The BTO Annual Conference at Swanwick on 3rd-5th December was once again a well-attended success, combining a unique social occasion with excellent talks. James Hancock's illustrated journey through north Australia's wetlands provided an interesting and light-hearted start to the conference; Saturday's talks included Dr Raymond O'Connor's story of the Stock Dove (shortly to be published in *BB*), Peter Robinson's account of ornithological crime-busting, and the 14th Witherby Memorial Lecture, delivered by Dr Janet Kear on the topic of eggs. Sunday's pro-

gramme consisted of two talks, by Gwyn Williams and Dr Ken Smith, and an RSPB film, all on the theme of wetland conservation; in the final talk, Dr Clive Catchpole revealed the intricacies of *Acrocephalus* song. After the annual dinner, the Tucker Medal was presented to Peter Davis. Later in the evening (and into the night) there was the usual disco, where some endeavoured to recover from a cork-eating contest!

The usual *BB* mystery photograph competition attracted 82 entries, of which 41 named all five species correctly. The winner of the draw was Simon Roddis, who received his bottle of champagne (and a kiss) from Cam Christie. (Contributed by Chris Harbard)

The Disco King The disco after the BTO annual dinner at Swanwick consisted of its usual odd combination of ornithological chit-chat (carried out at shouting level), particularly by groups of unmated males, and courtship displays by established and temporary pairs. Tempted by the promise of a mention in this column, the ever-lively (but over-75) Bernard King took to the floor with the youngest girl at the Conference. (Contributed by JTRS)

New recorder for Wiltshire R. Turner, 10 Rosenheim Rise, Lower Westbury Road, Bratton, Westbury, Wiltshire, has taken over from G. L. Webber as county recorder for Wiltshire.

Recent reports

R. A. Hume and K. Allsopp

These are largely unchecked reports not authenticated records

All dates refer to December unless stated otherwise, but many late November records are also included. Please remember that reports are required as quickly as possible after the end of each month (notes received after 8th of the following month may be too late for inclusion). To all our correspondents, especially those who regularly send local or county lists or copies of observatory reports, we give our continuing thanks; the gaps in coverage which remain will be obvious to regular readers: can you help to fill any?

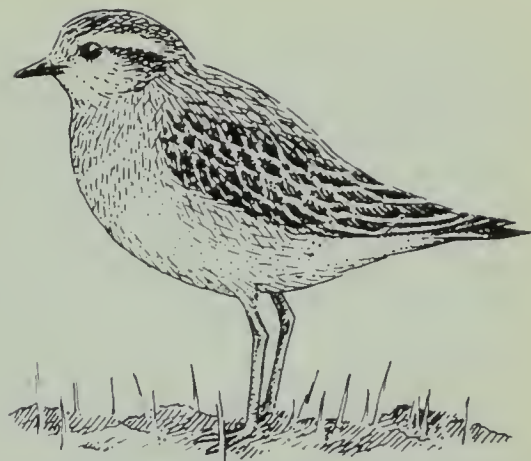
During the first week of December, anti-cyclones dominated the weather pattern,



with mainly east to southeasterly winds. When the centres of high pressure moved south from 7th, the weather became cyclonic westerly until the end of the year, with some very windy and wet days. Temperatures, however, remained near to the average for the month.

Wading birds

Completing the picture of the influx of **Cranes** *Grus grus*, there were three at Prawle Point (Devon) on 7th November, three at Spurn Point (Humberside) on 10th November, 17 in north Kent on 12th and 13th November, and 17 at Dungeness (Kent) on the last date. The **White Stork** *Ciconia ciconia* previously reported from Suffolk remained in the county until the end of the year. **Avocets** *Recurvirostra avosetta* included a remarkable flock of 54 at Selsey Bill (West Sussex) on 2nd; there were eight at Elmley (Kent) on 4th, six at Pagham Harbour (West Sussex)



on 21st and two at Staines Reservoir (Surrey) at the end of the month. An extraordinarily late **Dotterel** *Charadrius morinellus* remained at West Mersea (Essex) from 19th to 27th. A **Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola* was equally remarkable, staying all month at Kingsbury Water Park (Warwickshire). The **Western Sandpiper** *Calidris mauri* at Felixstowe (Suffolk) and the **Baird's Sandpiper** *C. bairdi* at Staines also stayed through into the New Year. A **Grey Phalarope** *Phalaropus fulicarius* stayed at Blithfield Reservoir (Staffordshire) from 13th to 19th, and a **Kentish Plover** *C. alexandrinus* stayed all month at Cliffe (Kent).

Wildfowl

Bean Geese *Anser fabalis* staged a minor influx into unusual places—perhaps a foretaste of another good year—with six at Pitsford Reservoir (Northamptonshire) on 8th, nine at Little Paxton (Cambridgeshire) from 11th to 18th and nine at Benacre (Suffolk) early in January. Earlier at Pitsford there had been 70 **Brent Geese** *Bryanta bernicla* on 22nd October. Brents in north Norfolk included one of the Nearctic race *nigricans*. Several inland **Barnacle Geese** *B. leucopsis* were reported, including one visible from the BB editorial office, on Blunham Gravel-pit (Bedfordshire). An **American Wigeon** *Anas americana* was watched at Ditchford Gravel-pit (Northamptonshire) from 24th November until 6th. Several **Eiders** *Somateria mollissima* appeared in the English midlands early in the month and five **Velvet Scoters** *Melanitta fusca* reached Pitsford on 2nd. An earlier count of this species was of 111 passing Foreness Point (Kent) on 5th November (with over 1,000 **Common Scoters** *M. ugra*). **Ruddy Ducks** *Oxyura jamaicensis* are still relatively few in East Anglia and 15 at Abberton Reservoir (Essex) on 28th represents a good count for the region; there were five at Bough Beech (Kent) on 5th.



Gulls, terns and skuas

Best Christmas present this year must have been a **Ross's Gull** *Rhodostethia rosea* in Shetland on 26th. **Iceland Gulls** *Larus glaucoideus* were generally scarce but, bang on cue with their usual Christmas-time arrival, four or five turned up in the West Midland area, with four, seen singly, at Chasewater (West Midlands/Staffordshire), and seven were reported from Co. Dublin and Co. Louth.

Mediterranean Gulls *L. melanocephalus* included a maximum count of 14 at Folkestone (Kent) on 13th November. Three Mediterranean and four **Ring-billed Gulls** *L. delawarensis* were noted in Ireland. A late tern, at Benacre on 16th, was thought to be an **Arctic Tern** *Sterna paradisaea*. On 1st January, a **Pomarine Skua** *Stercorarius pomarinus* flew by offshore at Minsmere (Suffolk).

Birds of prey

Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus* and **Short-eared Owls** *Asio flammeus* appeared in good numbers in eastern and midland counties of England. **Rough-legged Buzzards** *Buteo lagopus* included two singles in Kent in November, one in the Upper Derwent (Derbyshire) from 7th to 13th November, and one at Walberswick (Suffolk) from 16th into January. A **Gyr Falcon** *Falco rusticolus*, first seen in Co. Derry in October, reappeared on 20th.

Late summer visitors

The year 1982 was certainly unusual for summer visitors hanging on very late in many areas. Slapton Ley (Devon) had a **Sedge Warbler** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* on 13th November and a **Reed Warbler** *A. scirpaceus* on 13th and 14th November. **Blackcaps** *Sylvia atricapilla* remained to winter in very good numbers in the southwest and in south Wales, and a **Garden Warbler** *S. borin* was still at Jesmond Dene (Tyne & Wear) on 29th November. There was a **Whinchat** *Saxicola rubetra* at Dartington (Devon) on 27th November and **Swifts** *Apus apus* were seen in several counties in early November, including four watched singly in Kent until 14th November. At Wells (Norfolk) there was a **Swallow** *Hirundo rustica* and two **House Martins** *Delichon urbica* on 29th November and another House Martin on 5th; up to five House Martins were at each of several Kent sites until 27th November and there was one at Dunwich (Suffolk), with a **Swallow**, on 14th December.

Other passerines

For a week in November there was a **Rufous**

Bush Robin *Cercotrichas galactotes* at Holme (Norfolk). A probable **Paddyfield Warbler** *A. agricola* was trapped, exhausted, at North Slob (Wexford) on 3rd. **Great Grey Shrikes** *Lanius excubitor* were apparently not very common, but one reached as far west as Ottery St Mary (Devon) on 13th. **Firecrests**



Regulus ignicapillus totalled 17 at Dungeness on 3rd November and 20 or more at Foreness Point on 9th November. The **Crossbills** *Loxia curvirostra* and **Parrot Crossbills** *L. pytyopsittacus* already reported continued to confuse: at Howden Reservoir (Derbyshire) opinions varied from as many as 30 Parrots to one or two—or none at all—with up to 60 Crossbills. 25 or more crossbills appeared on Cannock Chase (Staffordshire), looking heavy-billed, but not quite so grotesquely large-billed as typical Parrot Crossbills (comparison with photographs leading to **Scottish Crossbill** *L. scotica*!). 21 crossbills were noted in Tyne & Wear in late November and smaller parties occurred elsewhere, all worth a close look. A clarification of characters would be very welcome—assuming it is possible; meanwhile many good observers continue to look at some birds and refuse to come to any conclusion.

Correction

In earlier reports we have referred to Wath Ings (North Yorkshire) (see, for instance, 75: 394, plate 149, 75: 598); please note that Wath Ings is in fact in South Yorkshire.

Latest news

Early February: **Little Auks** *Alle alle* in excess of 1,000 on east coast of England, with inland records in Midlands and south-east England; influx of **Iceland Gulls** to north and west Scotland, with up to 40 a day in Shetland; **Rock Thrush** *Monticola saxatilis* on Isle of Sheppey (Kent).

Reviews

Sounds Natural. Cassette SN792 Wildfowl Trust: Wildfowl Portraits No. 1. With Mike Lubbock and Ken Jackson. Cassette SN817 Blenheim Birdsong in Spring. With Bruce Campbell and Ken Jackson. Sounds Natural, Charlbury, 1981. Cassettes £3.00, slide sets £4.00 (p&p 30p for first cassette or slide set plus 15p for each extra item). Available from Sounds Natural, Bag End, Ditchley Road, Charlbury, Oxford OX7 3QT.

The idea is interesting: cassettes with knowledgeable people talking on natural history subjects, in the field, and the appropriate background noises. Some of the cassettes have accompanying sets of colour transparencies. Thus, these are especially suitable for small clubs or societies (e.g. local YOC groups) or for use in schools. While they will also be enjoyable and of interest to individuals, we wonder whether most people would want to listen to a tape more than once or twice and, therefore, whether most people would want to buy (rather than borrow) a set. Some less knowledgeable people who listened to these tapes commented that the bird sounds were sometimes difficult to distinguish in the background (considerably quieter than the people talking, and with, on occasions, more than one species singing or calling simultaneously).

There are over 24 different titles available, with more than one-third of them having an ornithological flavour. This is a good idea, which deserves success.

PETER HOLDEN and J. T. R. SHARROCK

Bird Spot: more British wild birds in stereo. Recorded mostly by David Tombs and compiled by John F. Burton and Margaret Reese. Album REC438 Stereo; cassette ZCM438. BBC, 1982. Album £2.99; cassette £2.99.

Marvellous quality and with some interesting recordings, but would not most people prefer to have a recording of a Grey Heron's 'fraank' than the noises of nestlings being fed by an adult?; and I was likewise disappointed to find that, although I was *told* about the differences between the calls and drumming of Great Spotted and of Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers, the actual noises made by the latter species were denied me (the recording including only 'hunger calls of nestlings with anxiety calls of adult'). Thus, although full of interesting material, this compilation is something of a Magpie's hoard rather than a systematic collection for reference. The quality, however, is stupendous.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

The Shelduck: a study in behavioural ecology. By I. J. Patterson. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1982. 276 pages; 6 black-and-white plates; 18 line-drawings. £27.50.

This is not a bird monograph written for the popular market: as a glance at the price will confirm. Instead, it is a serious scientific study which uses the author's unrivalled knowledge of the Shelduck to illustrate and discuss a number of modern theoretical issues concerned with behavioural ecology. The text is closely argued, and packed with tables and figures. There are a few photographs, together with some half-tone drawings of behavioural postures, plus purely decorative chapter headings.

For an explanation of behavioural ecology I cannot do better than slightly paraphrase the author. It incorporates ecological and selective aspects of animal behaviour and the behavioural aspects of animal ecology. It is concerned with the interrelationships between the environment (e.g. food, nest sites and shelter), behaviour (including territorial aggression and dominance), and population variables (such as density, reproduction and mortality).

Using those parameters, the author describes in detail the life-history of the Shelduck as it has been revealed largely by his own and co-workers' studies on the Ythan Estuary, Aberdeenshire, as well as by others elsewhere in Britain and Europe. Following the annual cycle of the birds, the successive chapters deal with the winter flock, territories, nest sites, laying, incubation and care of young, duckling survival, and their coming together into non-breeding flocks.

Finally, the material of the book is brought together into a discussion of what limits Shelduck populations.

Shelducks have a very complicated social organisation which changes dramatically through the course of the year. Wintering flocks on large estuaries disperse into smaller flocks on breeding areas, then pairs take up spaced territories for feeding, but may indulge in group nesting. The parents defend a mobile and fluid territory around their brood, and then mostly abandon their young and move back into flocks for the moult. At times, breeding adults, immature non-breeders, and juveniles are all distributed separately. Patterson explores this complexity with great skill, and throughout the book there is much food for thought.

To pick out just one of his major conclusions, dominance is shown by some breeding males over others. It has been suggested as a mechanism for limiting numbers during the winter, and for excluding subordinate birds from the breeding areas. Patterson, however, argues cogently that the most likely effect is to limit the size of the non-territorial spring flock on the breeding estuary, by restricting the number of immigrant immatures which can settle. This has considerable implications because it is these same immature immigrants which Patterson believes are responsible for the steady growth in numbers reported in many estuaries. There is a paradox here, though, because the relatively dense estuarine populations, which have been much studied because of the sheer convenience of having a worthwhile number of birds in a confined space, are hardly if at all self-supporting, with high duckling mortality. It is the relatively unstudied (because scattered) single and low density groups of Shelduck which are probably producing a surplus of young birds sufficient to maintain and even boost the estuarine populations.

This is a very important contribution to the subject. It is just a pity that the publishers priced the book according to expected sales instead of taking a risk with a lower price so allowing more people to afford it.

M. A. OGILVIE

Birds of the Mediterranean and Alps. By Lars Jonsson. Edited by Iain Robertson and Mark Beaman. Croom Helm, London, 1982. 160 pages; over 80 pages of colour illustrations. £5.95

This is the last of a series of five books, four of which were published by Penguin (see *Brit. Birds* 71: 595; 72: 496; 73: 600); with the exception of a dust jacket, the style is the same. It is equally full of the typically Swedish-style paintings perfected by Lars Jonsson. He magically combines thorough knowledge and understanding of a bird, sharp perception, and the deft portrayal of character and action with an accuracy of plumage detail and a clarity of rendition which, for most artists, would lead inevitably to a lifeless result. Some of the waders are less successful: the more highly-coloured species are disappointing; but most are marvellous. The larks and buntings are especially good; the wheatears and warblers perhaps the best series yet produced, with all sorts of plumage phases—normally difficult to find illustrated (but most likely to be encountered)—fully covered. I feel, nevertheless, that just a few species lack the basic side and plan views necessary for a beginners' field guide: they are equally important for comparison and simple interpretation. An overhead view of a flying raptor, for instance, remains an essential basic tool, from which the appearance from other angles can be logically envisaged, whereas a Jonsson-style view, with action, tension and foreshortening, may show one shape perfectly but will not always allow extrapolation of shapes from other viewpoints. The text takes this slight inadequacy further: it is often necessary either to know the bird already or to have read other guides first because, for some species, the text discusses identification points rather than describes them, or omits them altogether. The approach lacks the discipline of a field guide, and could be frustratingly insubstantial or variable in its coverage for a beginner. Those who do know their birds will still find much useful and stimulating discussion and will certainly pick up new points and ideas; habitat and behaviour are well summarised and voice is often emphasised, with variable success. Some captions are misplaced and become misleading. The species included are far from complete for the area covered (you need the other four books), although a sprinkling of North African and Middle Eastern species adds much extra interest. Learn what you can from the text; enjoy the splendid paintings; and look very hard at the feather and pattern details which are all there to give greater knowledge and understanding to any careful reader of this book. Few people can paint with such technical skill; rather more know the birds so well; but the combination of both in one man is rare indeed.

R. A. HUME

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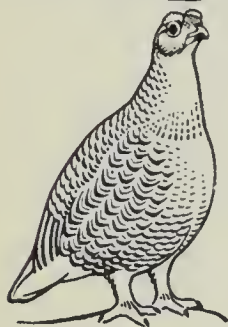
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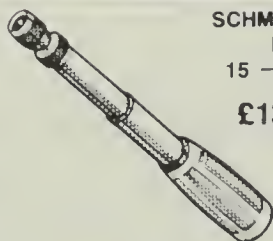
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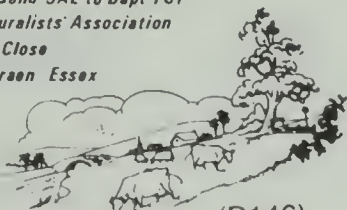
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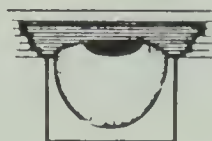


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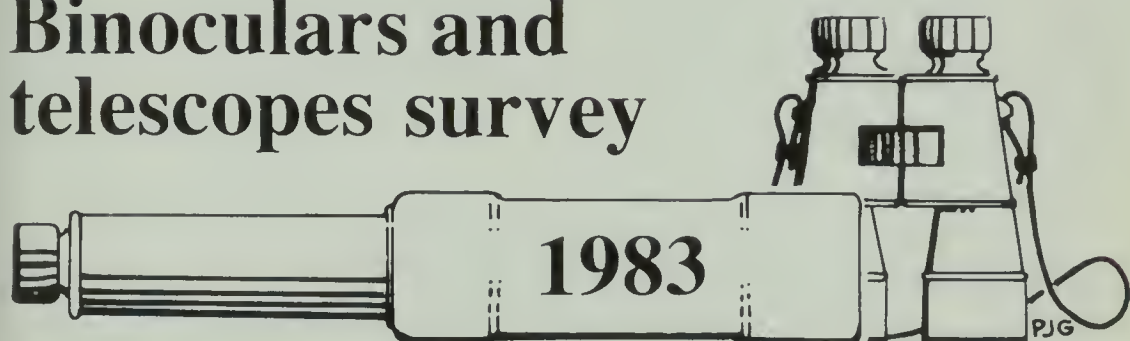
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British Birds

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Binoculars and telescopes survey



P. J. Grant and J. T. R. Sharrock

There are now probably over half a million birdwatchers in Britain and Ireland, of whom virtually all will own at least one pair of binoculars, which they regard as their most vital single piece of equipment. Many are now also acquiring telescopes and tripods. Thus, we considered that a repeat survey of usage of binoculars and telescopes was timely (our last was in 1978, *Brit. Birds* 71: 429-439). We thank the 671 readers who completed our 'Binoculars and telescopes survey' form (*Brit. Birds* 75: August, v).

We present the results mainly as 'league tables' (tables 1-8), which we intend to produce annually, so that prospective purchasers can identify the established, successful models and also the up-and-coming new ones. We believe that the tables and market information will also be of interest to manufacturers and retailers.

We have not included our own opinions on the performance of particular models, but hope that manufacturers introducing new models will arrange for them to be tested and reviewed under our new 'Product reports' feature, so keeping readers informed of new developments.

Both with binoculars and with telescopes, it is important to appreciate that what may suit one person may not be ideal for another—there are bound to be individual preferences regarding weight, balance, sturdiness, depth of eyepiece cup, focusing method and so on. Nevertheless, personal word-of-mouth recommendations certainly influence choice when repurchase is contemplated, and we believe that the results of this survey will be eagerly perused by would-be purchasers of optical equipment, since we distil here the opinions of several hundred of the world's most critical and frequent users of binoculars and telescopes.

Table 1. Most popular binoculars

The binoculars most frequently owned by knowledgeable birdwatchers in 1982

Position	Make & model	%
1st	ZEISS WEST 10× 40B Dialyt	15.1
2nd	ZEISS JENA 10× 50 Jenoptem	14.2
3rd	SWIFT 8.5× 14 Audubon	7.7
4th	LEITZ 10× 10B Trinovid	5.7
5th	MIRADOR 10× 40	3.6
6th	ZEISS JENA 8× 30 Jenoptem	3.0
7th	SWIFT 10× 50 Newport	2.8
8th	ZEISS JENA 10× 40B Notarem	2.5
9th	LEITZ 8× 40B Trinovid	2.1
10th	OPTOLYTH 10× 40 Alpin	1.8
11th	ZEISS JENA 10× 50 Dekarem	1.6
12th=	HABICHT 10× 40 Diana	1.5
12th=	ZEISS WEST 8× 30B Dialyt	1.5
14th	OPTOLYTH 10× 50 Alpin	1.2
	All others	35.1

Table 2. Most highly rated binoculars

Performance of binoculars as rated by their owners

Performance rating: 6 = excellent, 5 = very good, 4 = good, 3 = satisfactory, 2 = poor, 1 = very poor

Position	Make & model	Performance rating						Average performance rating
		6	5	4	3	2	1	
1st	ZEISS WEST 10× 40B Dialyt	87	15	1	.	.	.	Excellent 5.83
2nd	LEITZ 8× 40B Trinovid	11	3	.	.	.	.	Excellent 5.79
3rd	LEITZ 10× 40B Trinovid	25	13	.	.	.	.	Excellent 5.66
4th	OPTOLYTH 10× 50 Alpin	5	3	.	.	.	.	Excellent 5.63
5th=	HABICHT 10× 10 Diana	6	4	.	.	.	.	Excellent 5.60
5th=	ZEISS WEST 8× 30B Dialyt	6	1	.	.	.	.	Excellent 5.60
7th	ZEISS JENA 10× 50 Dekarem	5	6	.	.	.	.	Very good 5.45
8th	OPTOLYTH 10× 40 Alpin	5	7	.	.	.	.	Very good 5.12
9th	ZEISS JENA 10× 40B Notarem	7	9	1	.	.	.	Very good 5.35
10th	ZEISS JENA 10× 50 Jenoptem	27	51	11	.	.	.	Very good 5.11
11th	SWIFT 8.5× 14 Audubon	16	27	8	1	.	.	Very good 5.12
12th	MIRADOR 10× 40	3	19	1	1	.	.	Very good 5.00
13th	SWIFT 10× 50 Newport	3	11	4	.	1	.	Very good 4.79
14th	ZEISS JENA 8× 30 Jenoptem	2	12	5	1	.	.	Very good 4.75

Binoculars

Two models—*Zeiss West* 10× 40 Dialyt and *Zeiss Jena* 10× 50 Jenoptem—account for nearly 30% of the current ownership (table 1). In assessments made by current owners, four makes—*Zeiss West*, *Leitz*, *Optolyth* and *Habicht*—are all rated as excellent (table 2). The owners of four models are so happy with the performance of their binoculars that more than three-quarters of them would again buy the same: *Optolyth* 10× 50 Alpin, *Zeiss West* 10× 40B Dialyt, *Zeiss Jena* 10× 50 Dekarem and *Leitz* 8× 40B Trinovid (table 3). By combining the totals of those owners who would buy the same again and those who would change, it is apparent that the *Zeiss West* 10× 40B Dialyt seems destined to remain the most popular model (table 4). It is also especially noteworthy that three models are much more highly

Table 3. Most satisfactory binoculars

Proportion of current owners who would buy the same binoculars again			
Position	Make & model	No.	%
1st	OPTOLYTH 10×50 Alpin	7/8	87.5
2nd	ZEISS WEST 10×40B Dialyt	89/103	86.4
3rd	ZEISS JENA 10×50 Dekarem	9/11	81.8
1th	LEITZ 8×40B Trinovid	11/14	78.6
5th	MIRADOR 10×40	17/24	70.8
6th	ZEISS JENA 10×40B Notarem	12/17	70.6
7th	HABICHT 10×40 Diana	7/10	70.0
8th	LEITZ 10×10B Trinovid	26/38	68.4
9th	ZEISS JENA 10×50 Jenoptem	63/95	66.3
10th	ZEISS WEST 8×30B Dialyt	6/10	60.0
11th	OPTOLYTH 10×40 Alpin	7/12	58.3
12th	SWIFT 10×50 Newport	10/19	52.6
13th	ZEISS JENA 8×30 Jenoptem	10/20	50.0
11th	SWIFT 8.5×14 Audubon	17/52	36.7
	All others	71/238	29.8

Table 4. Top binoculars for 1983

Binoculars which would be bought again by their current owners or to which owners of other models would change

Position	Make & model	%
1st	ZEISS WEST 10×10B Dialyt	22.1
2nd	ZEISS JENA 10×50 Jenoptem	12.7
3rd	LEITZ 10×40B Trinovid	8.2
1th	SWIFT 8.5×14 Audubon	1.2
5th	MIRADOR 10×40	1.0
6th	ZEISS JENA 10×40B Notarem	3.6
7th	LEITZ 8×40B Trinovid	3.0
8th	ZEISS JENA 8×30 Jenoptem	2.1
9th=	HABICHT 10×40 Diana	1.9
9th=	OPTOLYTH 10×50 Alpin	1.9
11th	SWIFT 10×50 Newport	1.6
12th=	OPTOLYTH 10×40 Alpin	1.5
12th=	ZEISS WEST 8×30B Dialyt	1.5
14th	ZEISS JENA 10×50 Dekarem	1.3
	All others	30.4

Table 5. Most popular telescopes

The telescopes most frequently owned by knowledgeable birdwatchers in 1982

Position	Make & model	%
1st	HERTEL & REUSS 25-60×60 Televari	17.1
2nd	OPTOLYTH 30×75GA	16.2
3rd	BUSHNELL/BAUSCH & LOMB 15-60×60 Discoverer	14.9
1th	KOWA ×60 with changeable eyepieces	9.2
5th	NICKEL 15-60×60 Supra	8.5
6th	BUSHNELL 20-45×60 Spacemaster	5.2
7th	SCHMIDT & BENDER 15-60×60	4.8
8th	MIRADOR 20-45×60	3.1
9th	KOWA 25-60×60	2.2
10th	SWIFT 15-60×60 Telemaster	1.8
	All others	17.0

Table 6. Most highly rated telescopes

Performance of telescopes as rated by their owners

Performance rating: 6 = excellent, 5 = very good, 4 = good, 3 = satisfactory, 2 = poor, 1 = very poor

Position	Make & model	Performance rating						Average performance rating
		6	5	4	3	2	1	
1st	OPTOLYTH 30×75GA	57	27	3	1	.	.	Excellent 5.59
2nd	KOWA ×60 with changeable eyepieces	28	19	3	.	.	.	Excellent 5.50
3rd	BUSHNELL 20-45×60 Spacemaster	15	10	3	.	.	.	Very good 5.43
4th	BUSHNELL/BAUSCH & LOMB 15-60×60 Discoverer	41	27	10	2	1	.	Very good 5.30
5th	KOWA 25-60×60	3	7	2	.	.	.	Very good 5.08
6th	MIRADOR 20-45×60	4	8	4	1	.	.	Very good 4.88
7th	HERTEL & REUSS 25-60×60 Televari	11	49	23	8	2	.	Very good 4.63
8th	SWIFT 15-60×60 Telemaster	.	3	6	1	.	.	Good 4.20
9th	SCHMIDT & BENDER 15-60×60	2	5	13	5	1	.	Good 4.08
10th	NICKEL 15-60×60 Supra	2	12	13	14	5	.	Good 3.83

Table 7. Most satisfactory telescopes

Proportion of current owners who would buy the same telescope again

Position	Make & model	No.	%
1st	OPTOLYTH 30×75GA	74/88	84.1
2nd	BUSHNELL 20-45×60 Spacemaster	22/28	78.6
3rd	BUSHNELL/BAUSCH & LOMB 15-60×60 Discoverer	56/81	69.1
4th	KOWA ×60 with changeable eyepieces	34/50	68.0
5th	KOWA 25-60×60	7/12	58.3
6th	MIRADOR 20-45×60	5/17	29.4
7th	HERTEL & REUSS 25-60×60 Televari	25/93	26.9
8th	SWIFT 15-60×60 Telemaster	2/10	20.0
9th	SCHMIDT & BENDER 15-60×60	3/26	11.5
10th	NICKEL 15-60×60 Supra	2/46	4.4
	All others	21/92	22.8

regarded by their owners than is suggested by their current lowly positions in the ownership league, and all three seem likely to become increasingly popular choices among binocular-purchasers: *Optolyth* 10×50 Alpin, *Leitz* 8×40B Trinovid and *Habicht* 10×40 Diana.

In our 1978 survey we found that about one-third of birdwatchers wore spectacles when in the field; the proportion was unchanged in 1982, with 33.1% wearing spectacles. Of these, 58.6% put their binoculars to their spectacles, compared with 41.4% who raised their spectacles before or at the same time as putting their binoculars to their eyes. Thus, around one in five birdwatchers must currently have sought a pair of binoculars with minimum loss of field of view when used with spectacles, and probably one in three would be biased in favour of purchasing such a model next time.

Telescopes

At present, three models—*Hertel & Reuss* 25-60×60 Televari, *Optolyth*

Table 8. Top telescopes for 1983

Telescopes which would be bought again by their current owners or to which owners of other models would change

Position	Make & model	%
1st	OPTOLYTH 30×75GA	24.2
2nd	BUSHNELL/BAUSCH & LOMB 15-60×60 Discoverer	20.6
3rd	BUSHNELL 20-45×60 Spacemaster	12.2
4th	KOWA ×60 with changeable eyepieces	9.1
5th	HERTEL & REUSS 25-60×60 Televari	5.3
6th	KOWA 25-60×60	2.1
7th=	MIRADOR 20-45×60	1.0
7th=	SWIFT 15-60×60 Telemaster	1.0
9th	NICKEL 15-60×60 Supra	0.8
10th	SCHMIDT & BENDER 15-60×60	0.6
	All others	23.1

30×75GA and *Bushnell/Bausch & Lomb* 15-60×60 Discoverer—account for nearly 50% of the telescopes owned by experienced birders (table 5). Current owners of the *Optolyth* 30×75GA and the *Kowa* ×60 with changeable eyepieces rate their telescopes as excellent, and those with either of the *Bushnell* models (20-45×60 Spacemaster or 15-60×60 Discoverer) are hardly less full of praise (table 6). Over three-quarters of the owners of two models are so content with their telescopes that they would buy the same again: *Optolyth* 30×75GA and *Bushnell* 20-45×60 Spacemaster (table 7). The stated intentions of future purchasers suggest that two makes are likely to dominate the scene in the mid 1980s: *Optolyth* and *Bushnell* together make up 57% of the telescopes which current owners would buy again or to which they would change (table 8). The increasing awareness of the excellence of the *Optolyth* 30×75GA is emphasised by this model coming top in every 'league table' except that showing current ownership. It is also worthy of note that the *Bushnell* 20-45×60 Spacemaster and the *Kowa* 25-60×60 are much more highly regarded by their owners than their present share of the market might suggest, and, with word-of-mouth recommendation, are likely to be purchased in increasing numbers in the next year or so.

Of the 671 binocular owners, 543 (81%) also own and use a telescope. This compares with only 64% in our 1978 survey (*Brit. Birds* 71: 429-439), showing the great increase in telescope ownership by Britain's top birders. This is bound to be reflected in the future by increased purchasing of telescopes by up-and-coming young birders and by the less-expert 'weekend birdwatchers'. The practice of making full use of a telescope is also shown by 76% now claiming to use one 'always' or 'regularly' and only 8% 'occasionally', whereas in 1978 the figures were only 41% 'frequently', but as many as 27% merely 'occasionally'. There has been a similar change in tripod use. In 1978, 43% of telescope users 'never or rarely' used a tripod; this has now dropped to 11%. In 1978, only 22% said that they 'always' used a tripod; the figure is now just over 50%. The majority of expert birders now consider that constant use of a good telescope on a good tripod is essential, and well worth the inconvenience of having to carry that awkward combination in a ready-to-use position all day.

Table 9. Prices of binoculars and telescopes and summary of league positions

Make & model	Approx. retail price in February 1983 (incl. VAT)	Currently most popular (tables 1 & 5)	Most highly rated (tables 2 & 6)	Most satis- factory (tables 3 & 7)	Top models for 1983 (tables 4 & 8)
Binoculars					
LEITZ 10×40B Trinovid	£366	4	3	8	3
LEITZ 8×40B Trinovid	£353	9	2	4	7
ZEISS WEST 10×40B Dialyt	£352	1	1	2	1
ZEISS WEST 8×30B Dialyt	£307	12=	5=	10	12=
HABICHT 10×40 Diana	£223	12=	5=	7	9=
ZEISS JENA 10×40B Notarem	£149	8	9	6	6
OPTOLYTH 10×50 Alpin	£137	14	4	1	9=
OPTOLYTH 10×40 Alpin	£115	10	8	11	12=
SWIFT 8.5×44 Audubon	£110	3	11	14	4
ZEISS JENA 10×50 Dekarem	£95	11	7	3	14
SWIFT 10×50 Newport	£83	7	13	12	11
ZEISS JENA 10×50 Jenoptem	£68	2	10	9	2
MIRADOR 10×40	£52	5	12	5	5
ZEISS JENA 8×30 Jenoptem	£39	6	14	13	8
Telescopes					
OPTOLYTH 30×75GA	£208	2	1	1	1
BUSHNELL/BAUSCH & LOMB					
15-60×60 Discoverer	£174	3	4	3	2
SWIFT 15-60×60 Telemaster	£164	10	8	8	7=
HERTEL & REUSS 25-60×60					
Televari	£145	1	7	7	5
BUSHNELL 20-45×60 Spacemaster	£144	6	3	2	3
KOWA 25-60×60	£141	9	5	5	6
NICKEL 15-60×60 Supra	£141	5	10	10	9
SCHMIDT & BENDER 15-60×60	£137	7	9	9	10
KOWA ×60 with changeable eyepieces	£124	4	2	4	4
MIRADOR 20-45×60	£108	8	6	6	7=

The question of cost

Although not part of our survey, cost is obviously a major factor when a purchase is considered. Many of us might opt for, say, a pair of *Zeiss* or *Leitz* binoculars and an *Optolyth* or *Bushnell* Discoverer telescope, if we could afford the expenditure of several hundred pounds. For those with less to spend, this summary (table 9) will help to indicate the slightly cheaper options of almost-as-good binoculars and telescopes. The two lists are arranged in order of current price, from the most expensive to the cheapest.

We advise all purchasers to try out a variety of binoculars or telescopes (preferably in the field, though this is not always possible) before deciding which to buy. Perusal of table 9 does suggest that anyone not able to invest close on £600 in optical equipment—say, a pair of *Zeiss* 10×40B Dialyt binoculars and an *Optolyth* 30×75GA telescope with a good tripod—should certainly look closely at models such as the *Optolyth* 10×50 Alpin, *Zeiss Jena* or *Mirador* binoculars, and *Bushnell* 20-45×60 Spacemaster or *Kowa* ×60

telescopes. With the same good tripod, these models can be acquired at only just over half the price: less than £300.

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to Malcolm Ogilvie for his comments on a first draft of this survey report. Information on current prices was kindly supplied by Heron Optical Company, 23/25 King's Road, Brentwood, Essex; and by P. Wagner of Dixons, 64 New Bond Street, London. Especially, however, we wish to thank the readers of *British Birds* who completed and posted to us the forms on which this survey was based.

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Identification of white-rumped North Atlantic petrels

Peter Harrison



Leach's Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* and Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus* occur regularly off our coasts, mainly in the west and north, during March to October. For many birders, autumn gales provide the only opportunity to witness these small, mainly dark and closely similar species. The recent, and most welcome, interest in autumn seawatching has inevitably led to claims of sightings of two other species: Wilson's Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* and Madeiran Petrel *Oceanodroma castro*. The fifth member of the Hydrobatidae occurring regularly in the North Atlantic is the White-faced Petrel *Pelagodroma marina*, but that species is so distinct that it is not discussed here (see Cramp & Simmons 1977; Naveen 1981, 1982; Harrison 1983).

This paper is based largely on my own field notes, written and sketched over a period of 20 years in the North and South Atlantic and the Pacific and Indian Oceans. All measurements are taken from Cramp & Simmons (1977). The discussion on identification is limited to typical examples occurring in the North Atlantic and does not take into account the Leach's Petrels in the Pacific, which vary from light-rumped forms to those with



59. Wilson's Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*, South Atlantic, January 1977 (Dave Monteith, Joint Services Expedition)

wholly dark rumps (Ainley 1980). Neither does it attempt to catalogue the possible identification pitfalls due to moult, feather abrasion, and so on. Nor does it include notes on similar extralimital species which occur outside the North Atlantic: see Naveen (1981 & 1982) and Harrison (1983) for notes on such species as Swinhoe's *Oceanodroma monorhis* and Elliot's Petrels *Oceanites gracilis*.

The four species of white-rumped petrels occurring regularly in the North Atlantic are very similar. The combination of small size, similar plumage features, infrequent observation and less than optimum viewing conditions makes field identification difficult. Inexperienced birders may find it impossible.

Basic identification techniques

Despite general similarities, the four species—Leach's, Madeiran, Storm and Wilson's Petrels—all have diagnostic differences in structure and plumage which should allow experienced observers to reach a positive identification. Since these differences are subtle and slight, and because all observers see and identify birds differently, there will always be argument as to the best or most reliable way to assign a bird to species. My own approach to petrel identification is based on the awareness that they can be divided by structure and flight into two basic groups: (1) those with proportionately long and rather angular wings, and (2) those with shorter, more rounded wings.

The first group, typified by the genus *Oceanodroma*, has proportionately long, rather angular wings, with pointed wing-tips and a rather tern-like flight. Leach's and Madeiran Petrels are included in this group. The second group comprises those species with proportionately short, rather broad wings, lacking a definite angle at the carpal joint, with a blunt or rounded wing-tip and a weaker more fluttering flight. This group includes Wilson's and Storm Petrels.

The difference in wing-shape between the two groups (fig. 1) is caused mainly by the difference in the lengths of the humerus (A) and ulna (B). In *Oceanodroma* species, these two bones are comparatively long, whilst in the shorter-winged genera (*Oceanites* in this case) they are shorter, and thus form a shorter, more paddle-like wing-shape.

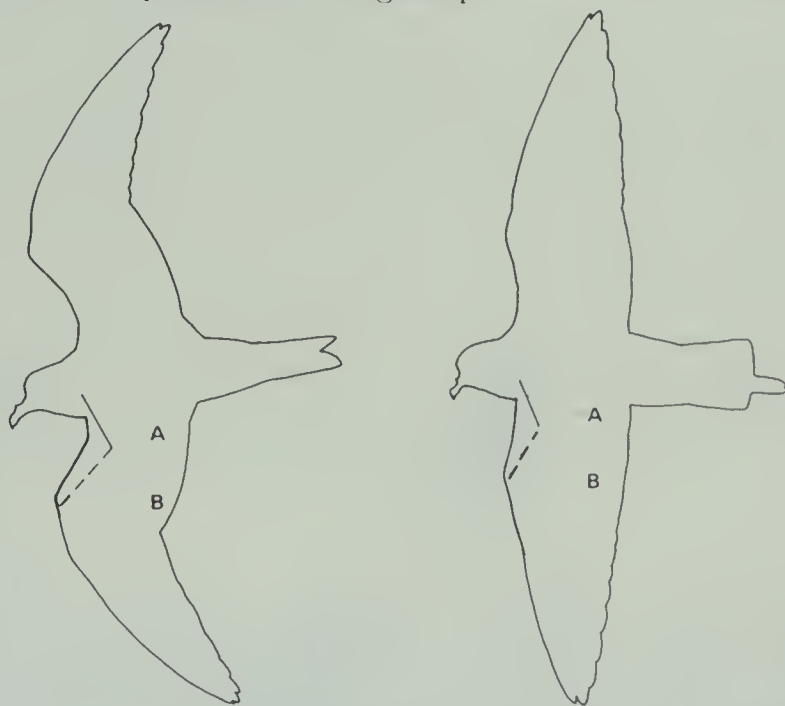


Fig. 1. Diagrammatic representation showing the different length of the humerus (A) and ulna (B) in 'long-winged' and 'short-winged' petrels

The real problem in petrel identification is overcoming the practical difficulties of deciding whether the wing-shape is long and angular or short and rounded. The task is made more difficult by the vagaries of light, distance, angle, sea conditions, and so on. I overcome the problem by concentrating on 'freezing' the image of the wing-shape in my mind's eye when the wing is at the apex of its upward beat. This technique becomes easier with practice.

Once the wing-shape of the petrel under scrutiny has been ascertained, a combination of certain plumage features and tail-shape together with flight should enable reasonably accurate identification (given comparative experience). It is necessary to concentrate in particular on the following four aspects.

Rump pattern

Rump patterns are often obscured by conditions or range; when visible, they can be diagnostic, but only when accurately recorded. It is of little use

to record the rump as 'white, without a grey dividing line' (some Leach's seen off Britain could be so described). The *shape* of the rump is what must be recorded: look to see if it is narrow, extending across the body; square and large, seemingly always in view; V-shaped; and so on. Note also the degree to which the white of the rump extends onto the undertail-coverts and rear flanks. Any marks on the rump (e.g. grey dividing line or dark tips to the feathers) should, of course, also be recorded.

Tail-shape

Range and sea conditions normally prevent critical examination of tail-shape of most of the four species under discussion. Leach's Petrel, however, has a distinct fork to the tail, which is visible under certain conditions, even at moderate or long ranges. Viewed from a high, stable vantage-point, tail-shape is often easier to record than some guides indicate, especially using a modern telescope. With practice, individual observers become aware at what range they are able to discern the degree of fork or squareness of the tail under given conditions.

Flight and feeding behaviour

The type of flight behaviour can enable an experienced observer to identify some petrels at ranges when differences in structure and plumage features are meaningless. Flight must therefore be considered as a potentially important identification character; but a word of caution: it is fallible. Flight varies with wind direction and force, sea conditions and the physical state and activity of the bird under scrutiny. (It also depends on an

60. Wilson's Petrels *Oceanites oceanicus*, USA, August 1982 (Alan Brady)



observer's ability to interpret such subjective and ill-defined terms as erratic, bounding, leaping, shearing, fluttering, and so on.) Always remember that, as most of our petrels are seen in gale conditions, their flight may be different from that described in popular guides, which normally refer to birds feeding or travelling in light or moderate winds.

Basic points to look for when concentrating on flight are type of course—straight, zig-zag, erratic, or bounding—whether it is slow or fast, the height above waves, the extent of gliding and the relative depth, height and speed of wing-beats. Also, when feeding, does the bird hold its wings flat and horizontal, slightly above the horizontal or in a deep 'V' above the back? Does it foot-patter, walk, skip, hop, splash or jump across the surface?

Wing markings

Paler edgings on the upperwing-coverts and underwing-coverts often form pale bars. On two species (Leach's and Wilson's) the upperwing bar is usually well developed; on Madeiran it is only moderately so; whilst on Storm it may not be evident even when viewed at close range. Storm Petrel has a variable but diagnostic white stripe on its underwing; some Wilson's also show a diffuse pale (but not white) stripe on the underwing.

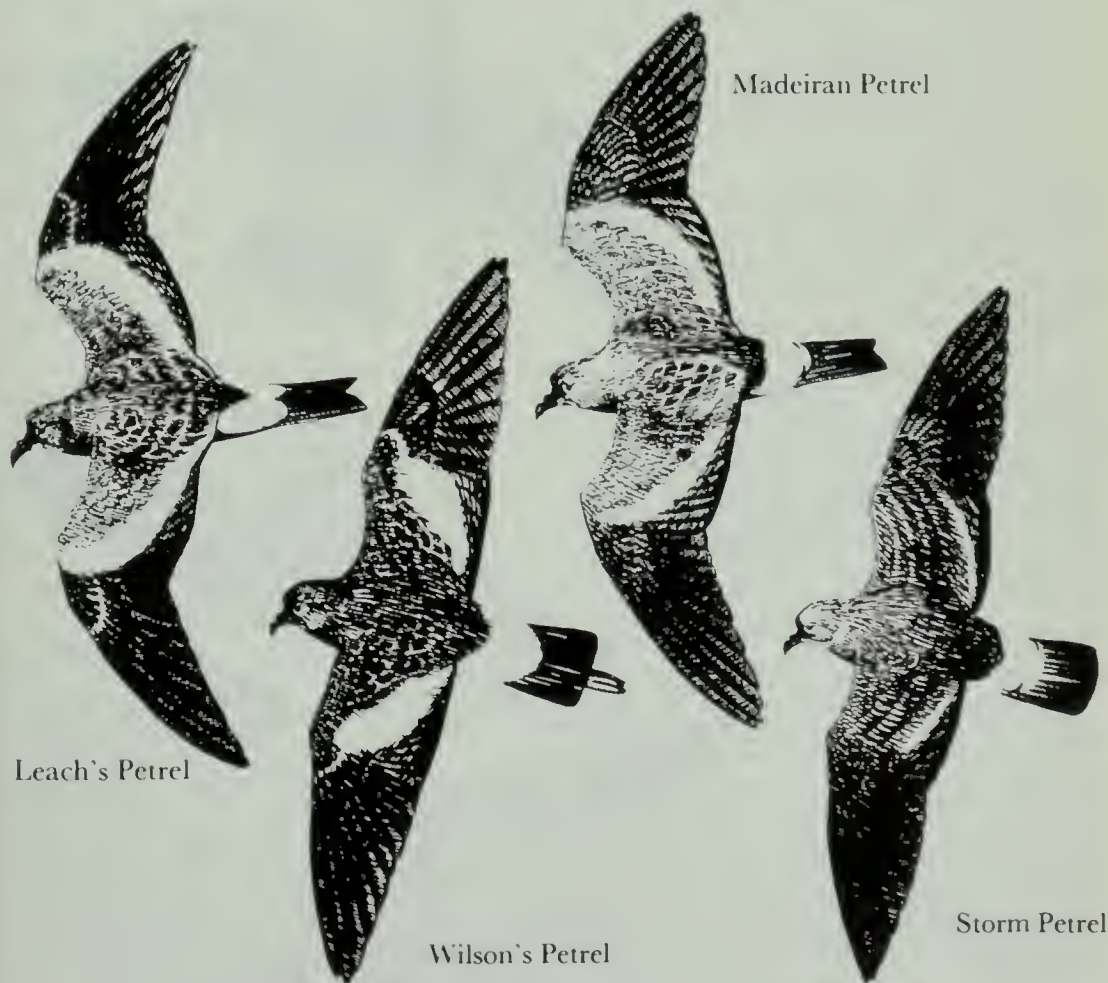


Fig. 2. Four white-rumped North Atlantic petrels in flight: Leach's *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*, Wilson's *Oceanites oceanicus*, Madeiran *Oceanodroma castro* and Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus* (Peter Harrison)

Fig. 3. Uppersides of re-treating petrels, showing rump patterns with tails slightly fanned (*Peter Harrison*)

Although Leach's *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* and Wilson's Petrels *Oceanites oceanicus* both have prominent upperwing bars, the wing-shape and rump pattern of the two species are distinctly different

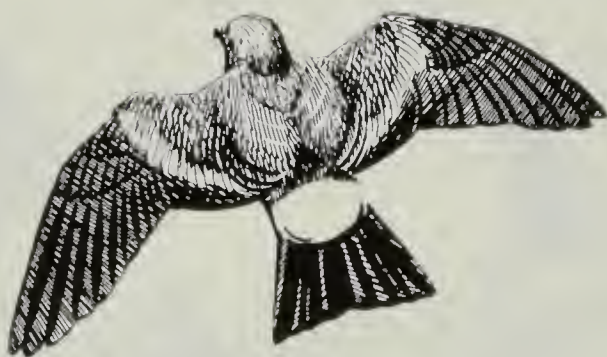


Leach's Petrel



Wilson's Petrel

Madeiran Petrel *Oceanodroma castro* appears intermediate between Leach's *O. leucorhoa* and Wilson's Petrels *Oceanites oceanicus*, but with less apparent upperwing bar and an even white rump. Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus* is the smallest and darkest of the North Atlantic petrels, with little (if any) upperwing bar, but a diagnostic underwing stripe



Madeiran Petrel



Storm Petrel

Once plumage features and tail-shape are added to the wing-shape of the petrel under scrutiny, identification should be straightforward (given comparative experience). In most sightings off Britain, the decision is relatively simple. If the wing is proportionately long and angular, with a definite bend at the carpal, coupled with an obviously paler upperwing bar, a forked tail and bounding, erratic flight: Leach's Petrel. If the wing is short, rather tapered at the tip, without a noticeable bend at the carpal, little or no paler upperwing bar, but a white stripe on the underwing and a square tail: Storm Petrel.

If vagrants are also considered, Wilson's has a short, paddle-like wing-shape, lacking obvious angles, a pronounced upperwing bar and the most extensive side extension of the white rump to be found on any of the petrels discussed in this paper. Madeiran is more difficult to separate, having a moderately long wing, but with a broader and more rounded wing-shape. These characters are discussed in more detail later. There are obvious pitfalls to consider: range and moult can obscure upperwing bars and rump pattern; and moult can also alter the shape of the outer wing (e.g. Marsh 1980).

Species accounts

The four species are illustrated in figs. 2 & 3, and the following notes treat them on a comparative basis, beginning with the short-winged group. Wilson's Petrel and Storm Petrel.

Short-winged petrels

Wilson's Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*

SIZE Length 15-19 cm; wingspan 38-42 cm. At sea, appears intermediate in size between Storm Petrel and Leach's Petrel, although some overlap with both.

PLUMAGE Appears generally blacker than either Leach's or Madeiran, but slightly browner than Storm. Rump and uppertail-coverts pure white, extending broadly to include lateral undertail-coverts. Thus, at sea, rump appears as broad white curving band over tail, *seemingly always in view* and much more conspicuous than rump of Leach's. Like that species, but unlike Storm,

upperwing usually shows pronounced pale bar across coverts. Due to wing structure (fig. 1), wing bar usually appears shorter and broader than on Leach's. Many Wilson's Petrels show pronounced pale flush on underwing-coverts, which should not be confused with diagnostic white stripe on underwing of Storm.

WING-SHAPE AND JIZZ Wilson's Petrel has proportionately short wing, with rounded wing-tip lacking definite angle on either leading or trailing edges. This character is more pronounced on trailing edge, which,

61. Wilson's Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*, USA, July 1974 (Alan Brady)



during glides, appears virtually straight. Tail short, square-ended, with rounded corners. Wilson's differs from other white-rumped North Atlantic petrels in conspicuously long legs, which usually project beyond tail in travelling flight. This character visible at moderate ranges given reasonable conditions. Yellow webs (which can vary in colour and extent) are virtually impossible to observe at sea unless at very close range. (In several thousand sightings, I have recorded yellow webs on only two occasions.)

FLIGHT *Travelling flight* : Wilson's has fairly

strong, direct course (though it occasionally veers from side to side), which may be up to 3m or more above the waves. Bursts of rapid wing-beats are broken by short glides, which give flight recalling Swallow *Hirundo rustica*.

Feeding flight: The walking-on-water, foot-pattering feeding flight of Wilson's, with wings raised high over back in V-shape, bill hanging down to water as it hops, walks and bounces slowly across the waves, is well documented in previous literature. No other North Atlantic petrel has a flight quite the same, nor does any have such long conspicuous legs. Habitually follows in ship's wake.

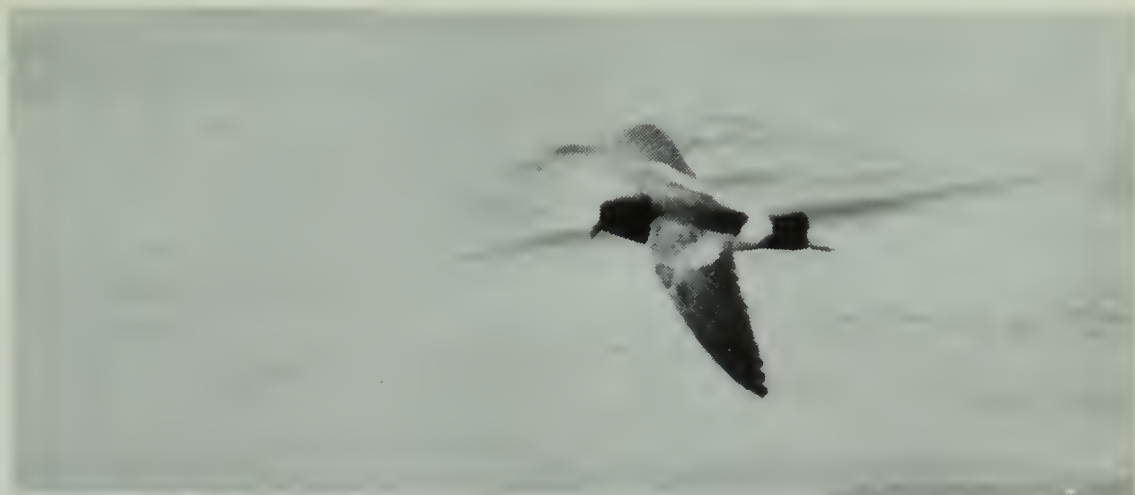


62. Wilson's Petrels *Oceanites oceanicus*, USA, August 1982 (Alan Brady)

IDENTIFICATION SUMMARY Wilson's Petrel most closely resembles a Storm Petrel in its proportionately short, rounded wings which lack a definite angle on both leading and trailing edges. It is readily separable, however, by the broad pale bar across the upperwing-coverts; greater side extension of white rump; lack of variable, but distinct white bar on underwing; much longer legs; a higher, and much more forceful, direct travelling flight, utilising fewer, shallower wing-beats, with longer more frequent glides. The height, directness and vigour of flight is quite distinct from that of Storm Petrel. By comparison, Storm Petrel is virtually black, with little (if any) upperwing bar, less side extension of white onto the undertail-coverts, a weaker, more fluttering bat-like flight, and diagnostic underwing.

Leach's Petrel differs from Wilson's in rump pattern, long, rather narrow wings, with pointed wing-tip, a definite angle on both leading and trailing edges, and a forked tail. The legs are also much shorter than those of Wilson's. Compared with Leach's, Wilson's has a more direct and purposeful travelling flight, with shallower, faster wing-beats, the wings rarely raised in high, tern-like posture, and shorter glides. Thus, flight lacks the bounding and erratic veering of Leach's.

Madeiran Petrel differs from Wilson's in rump pattern, more uniform upperwing colour and longer-tailed appearance. The wing is moderately long, and, although rather rounded at the tip, usually shows a definite angle on both leading and trailing edges. Madeiran also has a



63. Wilson's Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*, Bermuda, April 1978 (Keith Pellow)

shearwater-like travelling flight, with longer wing-beating periods and longer glides on flatter wings.

Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus*

SIZE Length 14-18 cm; wingspan 36-39 cm. Smallest Atlantic petrel, but largest examples equal smallest Wilson's Petrels.

PLUMAGE Darkest Atlantic petrel, appearing mostly sooty black at sea. Rump and upper-tail-coverts conspicuously white, extending just to lateral undertail-coverts. Rump appears as rectangular band over tail, always more conspicuous than on Leach's, but not so prominent as on Wilson's, which has greater side extension of white onto rear flanks and lateral undertail-coverts. Differs from all other Atlantic petrels in virtual absence of paler bar on upperwing-coverts, which, even at close range, may appear wholly dark. Underwing diagnostic, bearing distinct white bar of variable extent across coverts. Wilson's often shows diffuse paler (but not white) flush on underwing-coverts, whilst Leach's and Madeiran show mostly dark underwings.

WING-SHAPE AND JIZZ Storm Petrel has pro-

portionately short, broad wing, with little or no bend at carpal joint, and rounded but slightly tapering tip. Tail appears short and square, with rounded corners. Unlike Wilson's, legs are so short that they are rarely seen at sea and do not project beyond the tail in travelling flight.

FLIGHT

Travelling flight: Storm Petrel has rather weak, fluttering, bat-like flight, with almost continual flapping interspersed with short glides, usually direct and low over waves.

Feeding flight: Resembles Wilson's, but wings raised only midway over back, with short legs pattering on surface. Progression at such times slow, often stationary, and lacking Wilson's accomplished walking-on-water technique. In strong winds, often blown backwards or sideways many metres. Follows in wake, although perhaps never to extent that Wilson's does; frequently attends fishing vessels.

IDENTIFICATION SUMMARY Storm Petrel most closely resembles Wilson's in its proportionately short wings, which lack a pronounced angle on both leading and trailing edges. Separable from Wilson's and all other North Atlantic petrels by virtual lack of paler bar across upperwing-coverts (pale bar is most pronounced on fresh juveniles during autumn), diagnostic underwing pattern, and fluttering bat-like flight. Compared with Wilson's, travelling flight more hesitant and weaker, with quicker wing-beats and shorter glides, rarely as high, strong or vigorous. The white side extension of rump is less extensive, and the legs are shorter.

By comparison, Leach's Petrel is larger than Storm Petrel, with proportionately longer, angular wings, pointed at tip and held bent at the carpal joint, with a prominent upperwing bar, forked tail and a duller V-shaped rump which shows less side extension onto the flanks. The flight of Leach's is much stronger than that of Storm Petrel, more buoyant, on tern-like wings, with slower, deeper wing-beats accompanied by erratic changes of course, height and speed, interspersed with longer shearing glides.



64. Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus*, Scilly, August 1979 (David Hunt)

Madeiran Petrel is larger and longer-winged than Storm Petrel, with different rump pattern, a proportionately longer, slightly forked tail, more pronounced upperwing bar, distinctly different flight, and a dark underwing.

Long-winged petrels

Leach's Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*

SIZE Length 19-22 cm; wingspan 45-48 cm. At sea, appears larger than other white-rumped North Atlantic petrels, although some overlap occurs with both Madeiran and Wilson's Petrels.

PLUMAGE Appears generally dark greyish-brown to brownish-black, paler than either Storm or Wilson's Petrels. Rump and upper-

tail-coverts white, with minimal side extension to flanks and lateral undertail-coverts. At very close range (no more than about 200 m), diagnostic grey dividing line down centre of rump may be visible. Under most viewing conditions, however, rump appears distinctively V-shaped and comparatively duller, less striking or apparent than those of Wilson's, Storm or Madeiran Petrels. Upperwing usually shows pro-

65. Leach's Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*, Dorset, November 1982 (Peter Harrison)





66. Leach's Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*, Bermuda, June 1977 (Keith Pellow)

nounced paler bar across coverts, often visible at ranges when white rump is not. (By comparison, Madeiran usually shows distinct white rump at ranges when its pale upperwing bar is invisible.)

WING-SHAPE AND JIZZ Leach's has proportionately long, rather narrow wing, with obvious angle at carpal joint, corresponding angle on trailing edge, and decidedly pointed wing-tip. Wing-shape thus appears long and narrow, with swept-back, rather tern-like posture. Legs of Leach's are short and do not project beyond tail in travelling flight.

FLIGHT *Travelling flight:* Buoyant and graceful, wings rising and falling in deep tern-like beats. Course irregular, disrupted by vertical

leaping, bounding and sudden changes of speed and direction, interspersed with shearing glides on bowed, slightly raised wings, and carpal joint raised a little higher than rest of wing.

Feeding flight: Wings stationary and raised slightly over back (up to 20°), but more usually just above the horizontal, with carpal joint raised higher than rest of wing, slowly inching forwards into wind using feet as stabilisers, pattering and splashing across surface, occasionally walking. Some literature notes Leach's as rarely foot-pattering or walking, but, in gales at least, frequently does so, hanging motionless against the wind, short legs extended and treading water for up to 30 seconds.

IDENTIFICATION SUMMARY Leach's most closely resembles Madeiran Petrel in its long angular wings and forked tail. It differs from that species in rather narrower width of wing and more

67. Leach's Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*, Bermuda, May 1976 (Keith Pellow)



pointed wing-tip. Compared with Madeiran, Leach's Petrel shows a more pronounced paler upperwing bar, but a less distinct and differently shaped white rump, which has the least side extension of any North Atlantic petrel. In travelling flight, Madeiran differs from Leach's in faster, shallower wing-beats, with rather longer, shearwater-like glides, the wings held flatter, often below the horizontal, working a steady zig-zag course, banking first to right and then to left without vertical bounding or leaping. When feeding, Madeiran holds wings flatter, not raised at the carpal joint and usually more horizontal.

Wilson's Petrel differs from Leach's in shorter, more rounded wing-shape, which lacks the tern-like bend at the carpal joint; a shorter, broader upperwing bar; and a conspicuous white rump, which is seemingly always in view, whatever the angle of observation. The travelling flight of Wilson's is more direct than that of Leach's, and utilises faster, shallower wing-beats and shorter glides; its foot-pattering feeding flight, with wings raised high over its back, is very different from that of Leach's.

Storm Petrel differs from Leach's in much shorter, more rounded wing-shape, square tail, and darker, virtually black plumage, with little if any upperwing bar, and a differently shaped, more extensive and more apparent white rump. The underwing has a diagnostic white stripe. The travelling flight of Storm Petrel is weaker than that of Leach's, utilising faster, fluttering wing-beats and shorter glides; Storm Petrel's wings are held higher over back when feeding.

Madeiran Petrel *Oceanodroma castro*

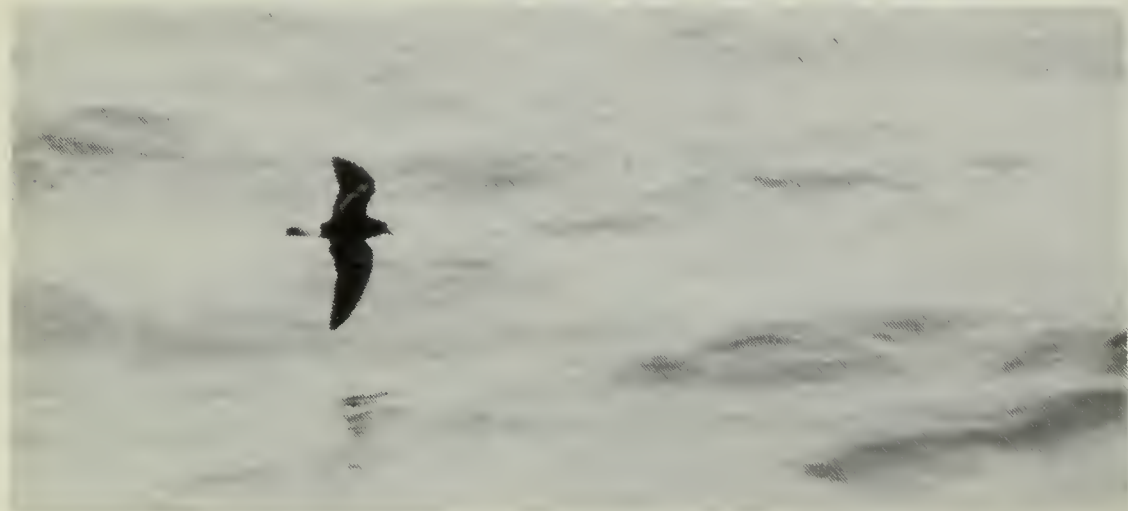
SIZE Length 19-21 cm; wingspan 41-46 cm. At sea, appears slightly smaller than Leach's, but averaging larger than either Storm or Wilson's.

PLUMAGE Madeiran Petrel appears mostly sooty-brown, paler than either Storm or Wilson's Petrels. Rump and uppertail-coverts white, extending to lateral undertail-coverts. This extension is slightly greater than that of Leach's, less than on either Wilson's or Storm. Black tips to longer white uppertail-coverts are rarely, if ever, seen at sea; thus, rump appears as conspicuous, even band across base of tail, quite distinct from duller V-shaped rump of Leach's. In this respect, Madeiran more closely resembles Storm Petrel. Madeiran has obscure pale brownish bar across upperwing-coverts, less pronounced than on either Wilson's or Leach's, but more pronounced than on

Storm. White rump visible at ranges when upperwing bar is not; in the case of Leach's, reverse is true.

WING-SHAPE AND JIZZ Some recent literature statements are contradictory concerning relative length and shape of Madeiran's wings at sea. Brown (1980) described Madeiran as a 'relatively short winged petrel' whilst in Cramp & Simmons (1977) Madeiran is credited with 'long wings'. These seemingly contradictory statements arise because Madeiran has a wing-shape intermediate between those of Leach's and Wilson's. Wings are relatively long, usually with definite bend at carpal joint, but, because they are rather broader than Leach's, with a blunt or rounded tip, they often appear short. During glides, with wings outstretched, wing may appear to lack a noticeable angle (see LeGrand 1983). Thus,

68. Madeiran Petrel *Oceanodroma castro*, Galapagos Islands, August 1982 (*Peter Harrison*)



wing of Madeiran can be described as like that of Leach's, but rather broader and slightly shorter, with blunt wing-tip, or equally as resembling Wilson's, but slightly longer, usually with definite bend at carpal joint. Pale upperwing bar much less conspicuous than on either of those species. At close range, under optimum conditions, tail of Madeiran is only slightly forked; the short legs do not project beyond tail in travelling flight.

Madeiran Petrels appear timid at sea: in my experience, they show no interest in following in the wake of vessels; they often fly off at a vessel's approach, and I have never been able to 'chum' them up from a small boat. They appear to spend more time sitting on the water than do the other three species.

FLIGHT *Travelling flight:* Steady and buoyant, weaving regular horizontal zig-zag of even height, with shallow wing-beats rising and

falling at quicker rate than Leach's, interspersed with shearing glides on wings held flat or bowed below horizontal. Unlike Leach's, wings are held flatter at carpal joint, and flight lacks that species' sudden changes of speed, height and direction. Occasionally, however (perhaps linked with prey sightings), doubles back on its course, gaining height, circling up to 3-4 m above waves, at which times wings are raised higher, more tern-like, and flight becomes more erratic. In winds above force 5, flight often more direct, less zig-zagging, utilising fewer beats, shearing waves on stiff flat wings, banking and twisting over wave crests like small shearwater. Some observers describe the travelling flight as having a quality recalling Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*.

Feeding flight: Much like Leach's, but wings held flatter and closer to horizontal during foot-pattering; occasionally runs or hops across surface on stiff, outstretched wings.

IDENTIFICATION SUMMARY At sea, Madeiran appears intermediate between Leach's and Wilson's Petrels, the wings appearing broad but usually held forward and bent at the carpal joint with a slightly rounded tip. Differs from Leach's in broader, slightly more rounded wing-shape, less apparent upperwing bar, more conspicuous and even white band across rump (not dull and V-shaped) and lack of obvious fork to tail (usually appears square-tailed at sea, but under optimum conditions, 200 m or less, slight fork to tail sometimes visible). The flight of Madeiran differs from that of Leach's in having a pronounced zig-zag progression, with faster, shallower wing-beats, with wings held flatter, more horizontal, during glides.

Wilson's Petrel differs from Madeiran in its shorter wings, which lack a definite bend at the carpal joint, a more apparent upperwing bar, greater side extension to white rump, and long legs, which project beyond tail in travelling flight. Feeding flight of Wilson's, with wings raised high over back and legs trailing, is distinctly different from that of Madeiran Petrel.

Storm Petrel is smaller, darker, with little if any upperwing bar, a diagnostic white stripe on underwing, and a weaker, more fluttering flight.

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Summary

The four North Atlantic white-rumped petrels (Wilson's Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*, Leach's Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*, Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus* and Madeiran Petrel *Oceanodroma castro*) have diagnostic differences in structure and plumage which, under optimum conditions, should enable experienced observers to reach a positive field identification. These differences, together with flight characters, are discussed in detail, following a brief introduction on basic identification techniques.

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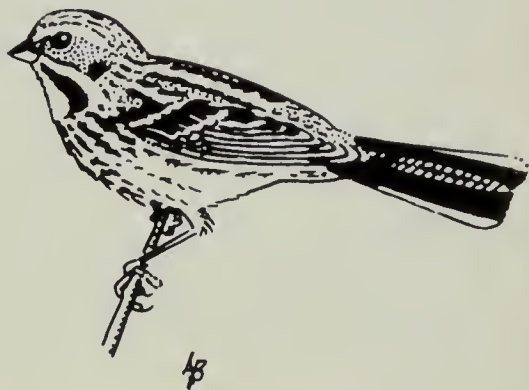
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Identification of first-winter Pallas's Reed Bunting



Nick Riddiford and Tony Broome

A first-winter female Pallas's Reed Bunting *Emberiza pallasi* on Fair Isle, Shetland, on 17th September 1981, was tentatively identified in the field. Examination of skins and a literature search were necessary, however, to determine the features diagnostic of this species in first-winter plumage.

The Fair Isle bird was reported as a small, odd-looking bunting by TB, who had just been watching Reed Buntings *E. schoeniclus*. He immediately noted this individual as different. At times it was difficult to see in long grass, but in 30 minutes' watching it allowed sufficient views at close quarters in good light for the 20 observers present to take detailed field notes of virtually all the bird's features. Despite this, no-one was prepared confidently to name the species, though all agreed that the final identification rested between runt Reed Bunting and Pallas's Reed Bunting. Keen students of *British Birds* were able to confirm that the bird had several characters of Pallas's Reed Bunting, and there were clearly a number of features which were 'wrong' for Reed Bunting. One that worried observers initially was the amount of streaking on the breast, flanks and rump: far

more than anyone had expected for Pallas's Reed Bunting. The bird was, however, trapped later that day, and its identity confirmed as Pallas's Reed Bunting.

Field description

HEAD Forehead and crown dull brown, with olive tint, finely streaked darker. Nape with grey wash, finely streaked darker (more noticeable in some lights). Supercilium creamy, slightly thinner in front of eye than behind; reached rear of ear-coverts. Eye-stripe, including lores, not prominent, but slightly darker than ear-coverts (again, more prominent in certain lights). Ear-coverts bright brown, but not rusty as on Little Bunting *E. pusilla*. Pale spot in top rear corner of ear-coverts, visible only at very close range. Ear-coverts bordered on lower edge by thin blackish moustachial stripe which terminated in blackish blotch or spot at the lower rear corner of ear-coverts. Moustachial and malar stripes did not reach bill. Submoustachial stripe creamy-buff. Black malar stripe ended just short of level with rear of ear-coverts, its lower edge being sharply angled towards centre of upper breast. Malar stripes appeared almost to meet in middle of upper breast when viewed from front, being partially joined by blackish streaking of upper breast. Both malar stripes infilled, to show as two dark triangular patches on sides of throat.

UNDERPARTS Chin and throat whitish, neatly bordered by malar stripes and dark breast streaks. Breast white, streaked finely but prominently blackish, closest streaking at centre of upper breast. Lower breast, belly and undertail-coverts white, undertail-coverts finely but sparsely streaked dark. Flanks whitish, with blackish streaking running down from sides of breast (streaks thinner, greyer and more widely spaced on flanks). Sides of neck finely streaked.

UPPERPARTS Mantle and back pale brown with hint of grey, 'colder' in tone than that of Reed Bunting. Two pale buffish lines or 'braces' running length of mantle. Thick blackish streaking between these, and at either side, accentuated braces. Finer, less intense streaking admixed. Shorter, broken,

pale scapular braces running parallel to, and outside, main braces, but far less pronounced. Rump grey: generally pale grey, but varying in paleness according to light. Rump and uppertail-coverts finely streaked black; despite their fineness, streaks stood out prominently against pale background. Tail (from above) blackish, with extensive white edgings to outermost two pairs of feathers. Central pair edged warm buff from uppertail-coverts to tip, broadest proximally (this feature evident only at close range).

CLOSED WING Primaries and secondaries dark greyish, with bright rusty outer edges forming marked panel on closed wing from tip of greater coverts to about level with tertial tips. Tertials black, bordered pale buff, palest on outermost edge. Greater coverts black, with rusty outer borders, broadly tipped white to buffish-white. Median coverts blackish, tipped white to buffish-white. Lesser coverts cold grey-brown with fine darker markings (small patch of grey-brown approximating to lesser coverts evident at shoulder of closed wing, but, during preening, wing outstretched, fully displaying lesser coverts).

BARE PARTS Eye dark, surrounded by faint pale eye-ring. Lower mandible flesh-coloured, upper mandible dark. Legs and feet fleshy pink.

CALL Heard four or five times: sparrow-like 'chulp', 'chee-ulp' or 'tschee-ulp'.

BEHAVIOUR On the whole, very wary. When disturbed, perched very briefly in open before dropping into long grass or open crops. Despite being wary did not display 'nervous' disposition of Reed Buntings. Did not flick wings as much as do Reed Buntings (TB noted that the Reed Buntings present did so constantly). Had habit of spreading tail when perched on fence wire, more so than when feeding on ground. Long-tailed appearance in flight. Best views obtained when bird perched on block of wood at ground level 3-5 m from observers.

Hand description

Once field notes had been completed, the bird was trapped and a more precise record of coloration was made as follows:

HEAD Forehead and crown grey-brown, edged dull buff. Neck grey. Supercilium off-white, more distinct above and behind eye.

divided above ear-coverts by very thin dark brown line. Lores brown. Ear-coverts pale ruddy brown with very dark brown spot at

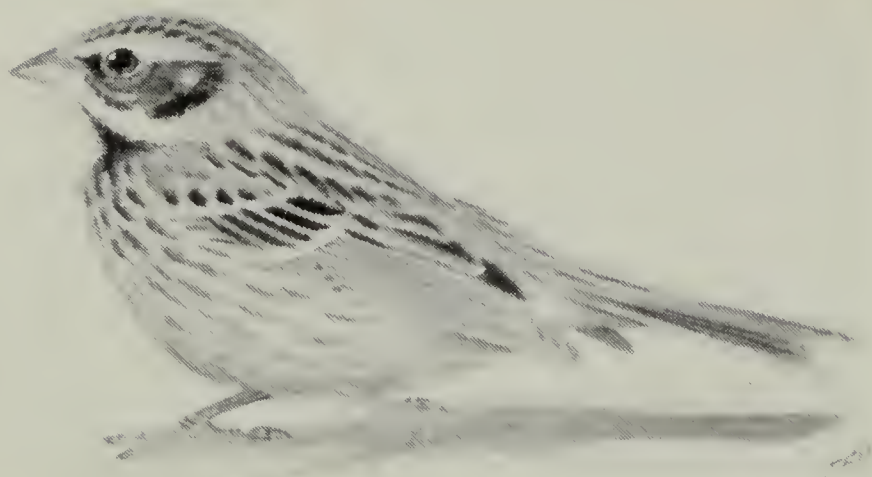


Fig. 1. First-winter female Pallas's Reed Bunting *Emberiza pallasii*, Shetland, September 1981
(painting by J. F. Holloway)

lower rear corner. Thin black moustachial stripe from just before ear-covert spot forwards as lower border to ear-coverts, but fading to very indistinct at base of lower mandible. Submoustachial stripe off-white. Malar stripe arising 3 mm short of base to lower mandible, then fanning out downwards as triangular black-brown patch to join with heavy streaking on upper breast.

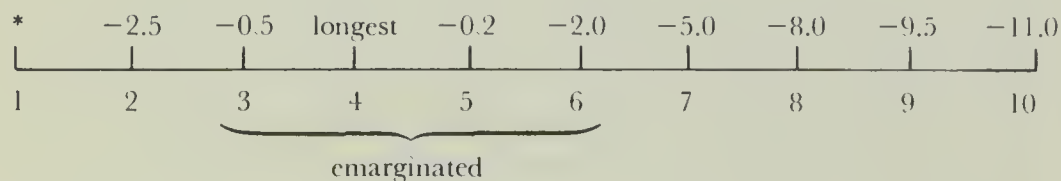
UNDERPARTS Chin and throat off-white. Upper breast heavily and densely streaked black-brown, almost merging with malar stripes to make virtual bib. Sides of breast more sparsely streaked, but heavier than flanks. Flanks sparsely streaked black, with thin short chestnut streaks on flanks/belly partition zone. Lower breast and belly off-white, tinged in places yellowy-green (probably staining from grass). Undertail-coverts off-white, very faintly streaked brown.

UNDERPARTS Mantle feathers black, narrowly edged chestnut and buff; buff aligning as braces when plumage not disarranged. Back grey-brown. Rump pale whitish-grey, with centre of individual feathers grey-black,

giving streaked appearance. Uppertail-coverts grey, with buff-white edgings. Tail feathers: central pair grey, with chestnut edge to outer web, buff-white edge to inner web. Other feathers grey-black. Outer two same, but outermost with distal two-thirds white, apart from thin black central wedge along shaft, and second outermost with white triangular wedge on distal third of outer web.

WING Lesser coverts cold olive-brown, edged grey and with grey-brown fringing to tips. Median coverts black, with well-demarcated buff-white tips about 2-3 mm broad. Greater coverts as median coverts but tippings slightly whiter, and broader on outer webs. Primary coverts and alula grey-brown, edged brown. Primaries grey, narrowly edged chestnut. Secondaries same, but broadly edged chestnut. Tertials grey, edged chestnut proximally, fading to buff-white distally, edging being uniformly broad. Underwing-coverts off-white, very faintly streaked brown. Underwing greyish-white, with very faint yellow wash. Cinnamon tinge to axillaries.

WING FORMULA



* 6.6 mm shorter than primary coverts

Wing point to secondaries 12.5 mm; to tertials 7.5 mm.

BARE PARTS Eye very dark brown. Bill: upper mandible black, lower mandible pale pink, palest towards tip. Culmen looked very straight, from forehead to tip. Legs pale pink.

feet very slightly darker.

MEASUREMENTS Wing 68 mm; bill 11 mm; tarsus 18 mm; tail 61 mm; weight 13.9 g (at 16.00 GMT).

Age, sex and race

The bird was aged as a first-winter on plumage-wear features. The plumage was generally fresh, but each tail feather tapered to a marked point which was slightly worn: adults would have extremely abraded plumage if unmoulted (cf. Broad & Oddie 1980) or completely fresh plumage including rounded tail feather tips if moulted (Svensson 1975). The bird was sexed as a female on throat- and crown-feather patterning and on lesser-covert coloration (cf. Svensson 1975): the sexes are readily separable on crown and throat characters, but sexing according to lesser-covert colour is probably not reliable (Dr A. Knox *in litt.*). The bird was considered to show characteristics of the northern race *E. p. polaris*, which is darker and more markedly streaked than the southern nominate race (Dementiev & Gladkov 1954).



69. First-winter female Pallas's Reed Bunting *Emberiza pallasi*, Shetland, September 1981 (illustrating pointers 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11 & 13) (Tony Broome)

Skins

In early December 1981, NR visited the British Museum (Tring) to look at skins. The Museum had a large number of the nominate race, including a good series of autumn females and first-years. Unfortunately, the only two specimens allocated to the northern race *E. p. polaris* were both breeding plumage adult males. One feature which stood out immediately was the rump, which was warm buff streaked darker on all females and immatures in the collection, not the whitish-grey of our bird. All other characters of the first-years, however, which were easily separated from adult females by the



70. First-winter female Pallas's Reed Bunting *Emberiza pallasi*, Shetland, September 1981 (illustrating pointers 4, 5, 7, 11 & 12) (Tony Broome)

presence of breast and flank streaking, were consistent with those of the Fair Isle individual.

Discussion

Despite the amount of streaking on upper breast and flanks, the Fair Isle individual was not as difficult to identify as we first feared. This plumage type is well described by Dementiev & Gladkov (1954), while other plumages described include spring and summer adult male and female (Kitson 1979), autumn adult female (Broad & Oddie 1980) and juvenile (Kitson 1980). Dementiev & Gladkov (1954) stated that the plumage of first-years is even more strongly marked with blackish-brown streaks after the post-juvenile body moult. Kitson's reference to streaks being finer and more widely spaced than those of Reed Bunting, and his accompanying sketch (Kitson 1980), relate to individuals in juvenile plumage prior to the post-juvenile head and body moult. This explains the discrepancy between his birds and our individual.

It is evident, therefore, that the literature adequately describes the species in all its plumages. But a considerable amount of searching in a variety of publications is necessary to piece together the various plumages. It also required research to isolate those features which were peculiar to first-winter birds of this species.

The two species with which Pallas's Reed Bunting is most liable to be confused are Reed Bunting and Little Bunting, so we concentrated on criteria separating first-winter Pallas's Reed Bunting from similar plumage types of these two congeners. Superficially, the Fair Isle bird resembled an autumn Reed Bunting, but was obviously smaller: this was confirmed by reference to the four or five Reed Buntings present that day and to the dozen or so Twites *Carduelis flavirostris* with which it kept loose company and which it matched in size. It was clearly not a Little Bunting, despite its similar size, differing from that species most notably in the lack of rich chestnut cheeks, lack of marked and contrasting head pattern, the triangular malar patches and semi-bib appearance, the extent and intensity of dark marking

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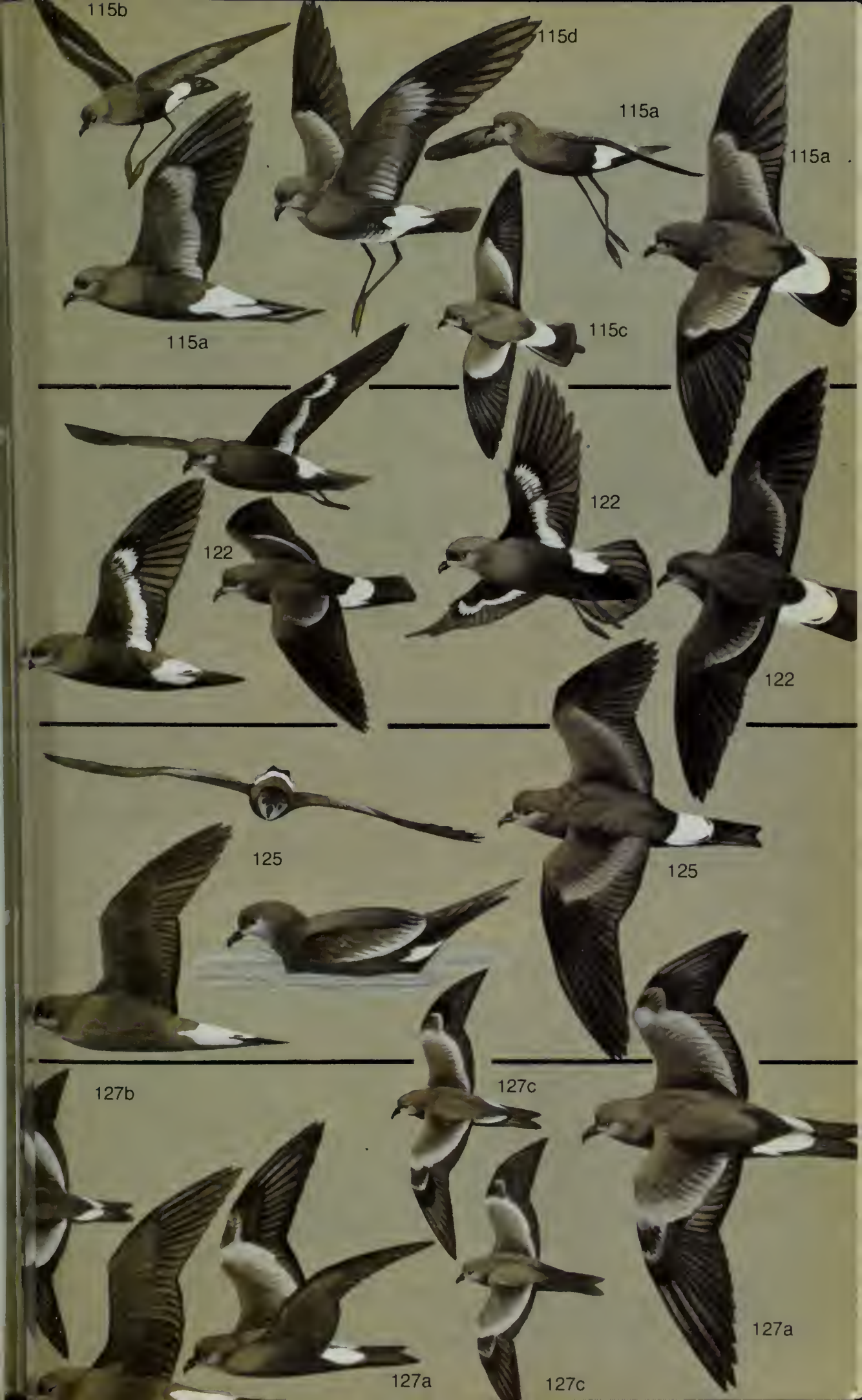
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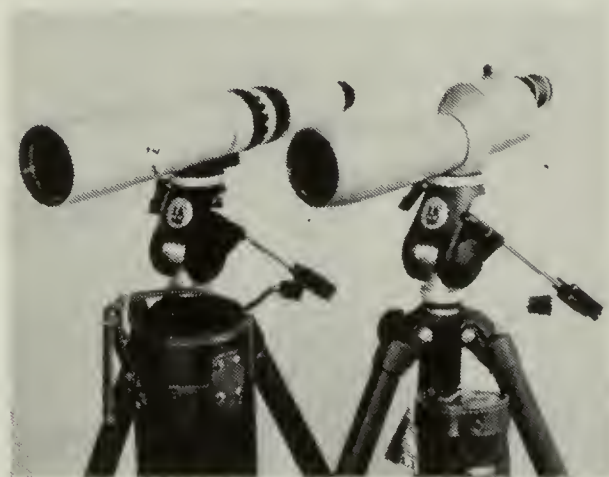
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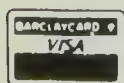
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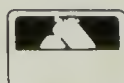


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71. First-winter female Pallas's Reed Bunting *Emberiza pallasi*, Shetland, September 1981 (illustrating pointers 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 12, 13 & 14) (Elizabeth Riddiford)

at the rear lower corner of the ear-coverts, the pale grey rump, and the distinctively sparrow-like call. The bill, too, seemed heavier and more reminiscent of Reed Bunting, though the culmen was straight, indeed straighter than on many Little Buntings, which have a slightly concave culmen.

We considered the possibility of runt Reed Bunting, but again several features were inconsistent with that species. The proportions were wrong: this bird seemed long-tailed, especially in flight, when its proportions were reminiscent of the accompanying Twites. The culmen was straight, giving the bird a quite distinctive profile. The head lacked the contrasted pattern of Reed Bunting; not only are a Reed Bunting's supercilia accentuated by the warm chestnut brown tone to the crown, but they are also bordered above by a dark lateral stripe and below by a dark eye-stripe. This bird had the faintest of eye-stripes and a very faint lateral stripe, hence the lack of contrast. The face pattern did not appear to add up to Reed Bunting. The ear-coverts looked bright brown, with the black spot at the lower rear corner a very marked feature. The black triangular marks and associated upper breast streaking made a pattern which very few Reed Buntings show (perhaps similar in a few late autumn to early spring males?). In the field, the moustachial stripe appeared not to reach the base of the lower mandible, and the malar stripe was well short of the bill: on Reed Bunting, a well-defined moustachial stripe and usually the malar stripe reach the bill (or the latter falls only just short). The chestnut panel on the secondaries on the closed wing was far richer than is shown by Reed Bunting. The double wing-bar also stood out far more than on any Reed Bunting, due to the individual greater and median covert coloration. On Pallas's Reed Bunt-



72. First-winter female Pallas's Reed Bunting *Emberiza pallasi*, Shetland, September 1981 (illustrating pointers 8, 9 & 13) (Elizabeth Riddiford)

ing, the black centres of the individual feathers accentuate the buff-white tips, while on Reed Bunting the greater and median coverts are brown-black centred and tipped brown-buff, giving very poorly demarcated wing-bars. The very pale grey rump was another feature more accentuated than on Reed Bunting. Finally, when the bird preened and displayed a set of cold grey-brown lesser coverts (not chestnut-brown as on Reed, cf. Svensson 1975), and uttered a sparrow-like 'chee-ulp' or 'tschee-ulp', quite unlike any bunting call we had heard before, it was clear that its identity was other than runt Reed Bunting.

Conclusion

Based on our experience of this individual and comparative examination of skins, we were able to draw up a set of criteria to separate this species from Little and Reed Buntings in the field. We have excluded a few characters present but not obvious in the field: for instance, the thin and sparse chestnut streaking on the flanks, noted in the hand on our individual and shared by the BM specimens. Equally, characters considered too subjective or variable—such as the intensity of black streaking on the upperparts—have been omitted.

We consider that the following are the main pointers to the identification

of first-winter Pallas's Reed Bunting; they are listed in approximate order of significance (see plates 69-72):

1. Sparrow-like 'chee-ulp' call
2. Small size
3. Long-tailed appearance
4. Bright brown ear-coverts, with conspicuous black or blackish-brown spot at lower rear corner
5. Cold olive-brown or grey lesser coverts
6. Straight culmen
7. Black triangular malar stripes, joining streaking on upper breast to form virtual bib
8. Two prominent buffish-white wing-bars
9. Very pale grey rump (*E. p. polaris* only)
10. Cold olive-brown crown and poorly defined supercilium, thus lacking contrasted head pattern of Reed Bunting
11. Prominent chestnut panel on closed wing
12. Malar stripe not reaching bill
13. Grey nape
14. Bare parts flesh coloured
15. Undertail-coverts finely streaked

Thus, call may well draw an observer to a bird in flight or on the ground, while the majority of other features are readily seen only when the bird is on the ground. The first eight pointers taken in conjunction are diagnostic. It should be borne in mind, however, that 'small size' and 'long-tailed' are subjective, the species' repertoire of calls will probably extend beyond a mere sparrow-like 'chee-ulp' (in fact TB noted that the bird gave a quiet 'sip sip' call when first flushed), while the lesser coverts are frequently very difficult to see in the field. Also, occasional Reed Buntings may show one or other of the features (though never all), such as black triangular malar stripes (on males approaching breeding plumage when, however, other male Reed Bunting features will show), and obvious wing-bars, though never nearly so prominent nor so white. Pointers 9 to 15 are questions of degree and can be displayed by Reed Bunting in the field. Thus, Reed Bunting shows a chestnut wing panel which, however, is never so marked as on Pallas's Reed Bunting. These lower-order pointers should, therefore, never be used as aids to identification in the absence of pointers 1 to 8, but act as useful supplementary characters when assessing an individual in the field.

Finally, a word of warning. Whilst it is our opinion that the above pointers will suffice to identify a first-year Pallas's Reed Bunting in autumn, we stress that great care should be taken to use a combination of these criteria and not to rely for identification on only one or two characters.

Acknowledgments

We should like to thank Derek Reid for arranging access to skins at the British Museum; Dr Alan Knox for checking further points there for us; John F. Holloway for the use of his

painting; and all watchers of the Fair Isle bird for useful comments on plumage features. Thanks, too, are due to Peter Grant for comments on, and improvements to, the text.

Summary

An account is given of the occurrence of a first-winter female Pallas's Reed Bunting *Emberiza pallasii*, probably of the northern race *E. p. polaris*, on Fair Isle, Shetland, in September 1981, with detailed field and hand descriptions.

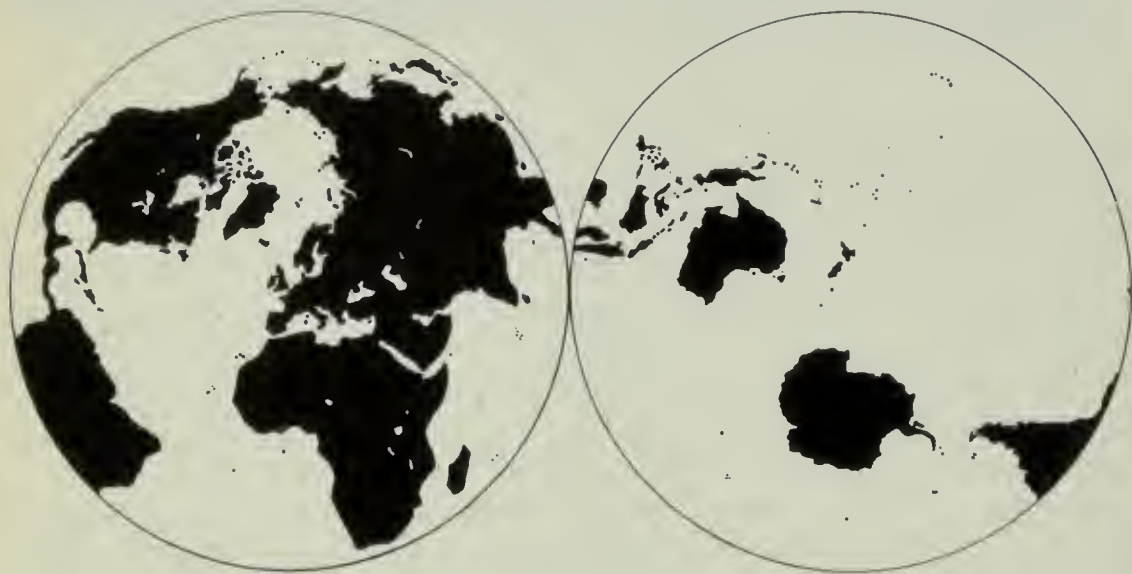
As a result of field experience, a literature review and skin examination, a list of 15 pointers is presented for the identification of first-winter Pallas's Reed Buntings; pointers 1-8 are considered diagnostic and 9-15 supplementary, but it is stressed that criteria should be used in combination rather than in isolation.

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Nick Riddiford and Tony Broome, Fair Isle Bird Observatory, Fair Isle, Shetland

Expeditions



Mark Beaman and Richard Porter

This is the third of these features on ornithological expeditions; our first reports appeared in April 1979 and May 1981 (*Brit. Birds* 72: 139-142; 74: 218-223). Leaders of expeditions within the western Palearctic (and also by British and Irish groups elsewhere in the world) are invited to send us details of their plans, so that we can announce forthcoming expeditions, and of their results, so that we can summarise their achievements. We hope in this way to aid the development of ornithological investigation, by

fostering the interest of potential participants and of potential sponsors, and to provide a showcase for the valuable reports which too often circulate to only a few enthusiasts.

Mallorca A small expedition organised by A. S. Richford and J. N. Platt to census Black Vultures *Aegypius monachus* on this Mediterranean island took place in spring 1982 and followed two previous counts: in 1967, when 67 were found, and in 1973, when about 40 remained (*Ardeola* 21: 225-243). The 1982 count showed that the downward trend is continuing and, at most, there are now only 15-20. This is a serious reduction in numbers: there must now be doubt concerning the population's chances of survival.

Morocco Wetlands and intertidal zones along the Atlantic coast of Morocco are known to be very important for Palearctic and Nearctic wader populations during autumn migration. The situation in spring is, however, relatively unknown. During March and April 1981, the Netherlands Morocco Expedition made counts in the Sidi Moussa and Merja Zerga areas. At the former, over 6,000 waders were counted in early March, whilst over 24,000 were observed at the Merja Zerga on 1st April. Dunlin *Calidris alpina* was the commonest species in both areas, followed by Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* and Redshank *Tringa totanus* at Sidi Moussa, and by Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* and Avocet at Merja Zerga. Over 600 waders were caught and ringed, and 28 controls were made. Of the latter, 21 were ringed the preceding autumn by the Durham University expedition to Sidi Moussa (*Brit. Birds* 74: 220). Birds were also marked with colour dye, and subsequent observations suggested that more left the Sidi Moussa area than was apparent from the counts of the numbers of waders in the area, thus indicating continuing immigration from the south. In addition, the intertidal macrobenthos was sampled. The preliminary results of the expedition have already appeared (*Wader Study Group Bull.* 32: 44-45), and a more detailed report is available from T. Piersma, Hendrikstraat 21, 9724 NA Groningen, Netherlands.

Mauretania Between January and March 1980, the four members of the Netherlands Ornithological Mauretanian Expedition carried out a virtually complete census of waders and other waterbirds at the now famous Banc d'Arguin. A staggering 2¼ million waders were counted: well in excess of autumn

numbers in the area (*Alauda* 43: 363-385). Counts included over 818,000 Dunlins *Calidris alpina*, over 542,000 Bar-tailed Godwits *Limosa lapponica*, over 366,000 Knots *C. canutus* and over 173,000 Curlew Sandpipers *C. ferruginea*. The counts indicate that, in midwinter, the Banc d'Arguin holds approximately one-third of all the waders wintering along the coasts of Western Europe, the Mediterranean Basin and the Atlantic coast of Africa combined. Additional work in the area included studies of wader activity patterns and food availability. Preliminary results have already appeared in *Wader Study Group Bull.* 29: 14. A very detailed 284-page report can be obtained (price 25 guilders or £6.00) from the Netherlands Ornithological Mauretanian Expedition 1980, Semarangstraat 8A, 9715 JW Groningen, Netherlands.

Cyprus The Army Birdwatching Society's expedition to Cyprus in October 1980 was primarily a ringing expedition, with work concentrated at two sites: Akrotiri reedbeds and the Bishop of Limassol's farm nearby. A total of 402 birds was ringed, the commonest species being Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*, Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*, Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* and Chiffchaff *P. collybita*. To some extent, the expedition continued the work carried out by other ringing expeditions and resident ringers. A few copies of the report, compiled by Major T. T. Hallchurch, are still available, price £1.00, from Lt.-Col. C. N. Clayden, MOD Defence Lands 3, Tolworth Tower, Ewell Road, Surbiton, Surrey KT6 7DR.

Nepal Many birdwatchers now include Nepal on their 'Indian and South-East Asian' itinerary and some spend several months there. Two such observers, Peter Ewins and Adrian del-Nevo, have produced a slim, cyclostyled booklet containing the results of their visit in 1980, and also a lot of useful information for would-be visitors. The booklet can be obtained, price £1.00, from A. del-Nevo, Calf of Man Bird Observatory, Isle of Man.

We hope that all those who venture to this part of the world will, of course, support Tim and Carol Inskipp's distribution project mentioned elsewhere in this article. We should, indeed, like to make a general plea to

birdwatchers visiting comparatively poorly known regions, many of whom make extensive observations over several months at a time. Please, if at all possible, pass on your observations to local or regional ornithological societies, or to individuals collecting records from the area concerned.

Ladakh, India An ambitious study by members of Southampton University was undertaken at Tikse, Ladakh (in the north-western Himalayas), from August to December 1981. The work continued studies made in 1977 and 1980, and a second phase continued the project until summer 1982 (but we have not yet received details). The ringing and observation programme has resulted in the recording of a number of new species for Ladakh and three—Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*, Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos* and Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*—new for India. Amongst the birds ringed were 941 Gldenstdt's Redstarts *Phoenicurus erythrogaster*, 334 Mountain Chiffchaffs *Phylloscopus sindianus*, 183 Brown Accentors *Prunella fulvescens* and 167 Scarlet Rosefinches *Carpodacus erythrinus*. Many of these were retraps from 1977 and 1980 when previous expeditions visited the area. The passage of Gldenstdt's Redstarts was very heavy during November, but unfortunately the peak period came when the expedition was short of rings due to postal delays, so 1,543 of the trapped redstarts could not be ringed. Since the start of the 1981/82 project, the expedition has learnt that a Hume's Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca althea* ringed in Ladakh by the 1980 expedition has been controlled in lowland India, near Jammu Tawi, on 22nd August 1980. It is hoped that retrap information collected in spring 1982 will provide sufficient data to calculate approximate values for the annual mortality of a number of commoner species. A number of faecal samples have been taken for detailed diet analysis. Systematic sampling of invertebrates has provided a reference collection for faecal analysis, and also a rough measure of the changes in the abundance of invertebrate food available to birds in the forestry plantation in which much of the work has been carried out. Further details of the expedition can be obtained from C. A. Denby and C. T. Williams, c/o Department of Biology, University of Southampton, Southampton SO5 9NH.

Nepal and India In the spring of 1982, Tim and Carol Inskipp undertook the first stage of

an ICBP Bustard Group project to investigate the status, distribution and requirements of the now critically threatened Bengal Florican *Houbaropsis bengalensis*. This took them to the lowlands of Nepal, where 30-37 males were located, with another three or so being found at Dudwa National Park, in India adjacent to the Nepal frontier. Females proved to be elusive, but, although only four were found, it seems likely that the sexes were present in equal numbers. The study showed that the national parks and reserves in Nepal hold most of the Bengal Floricans in that country. The greatest concentrations were found at the Royal Sukla Wildlife Reserve in the far southwest. The birds were also observed in two other protected areas in lowland Nepal: the Royal Chitwan National Park in the central region and the Royal Bardia Wildlife Reserve in the west. (At the latter reserve it was a complete surprise to find also two Lesser Floricans *Sypheotides indica*.) In east Nepal, the species may be reduced to one small area beside the Kosi Barrage. Next year, ICBP plans stage two of the project, with a study of the bird's status in northern India, thought to be the only other area where breeding populations may be found. Readers' records of this species in both India and Nepal are urgently requested to help assess the situation. The bustard investigations in Nepal provided a valuable opportunity to record other bird species, particularly in west Nepal which is poorly known ornithologically. The Inskipp's are collecting all information on the distribution of all bird species in Nepal, for the compilation of a book of distribution maps. If anyone is interested in this project or can provide any information, would they please write for further details to Tim and Carol Inskipp, 219c Huntingdon Road, Cambridge CB3 0DL.

Sulawesi, Indonesia A successful expedition to the island of Sulawesi, at the centre of the Indonesian archipelago, was organised by three undergraduates at Oxford University between July and September 1979. Based at Soroako in the southeastern peninsula, the aims of the expedition were to assess the effects of forest developments on bird populations in southeastern Sulawesi and to collect behavioural and ecological data on as many endemic species as possible. A very well-produced and concise report of this expedition has been published, listing all birds recorded, together with behavioural notes, descriptions and photographs of endemic

species. The results show several range extensions and suggest that forest bird distributions are affected by the underlying soil type and the level of human disturbance. A checklist of Sulawesi birds is also included. Copies of the report may be obtained, price 75p, from P. Holmes, 17 College Drive, Ruislip, Middlesex.

Greenland The Greenland White-fronted Goose Study's expedition to west Greenland in 1979 was based at Eqaungmiut Nunât from May to August 1979. Work focused on the Greenland race of the White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons flavirostris* (which has been declining in numbers according to censuses on its wintering grounds in Britain and Ireland). Studies included distribution and abundance, pre-nesting behaviour, nest site selection, breeding biology, breeding behaviour, predation, feeding ecology, post-breeding behaviour, ringing and an investigation of parasites. Importance is attached in the report to possible factors affecting the breeding success of the subspecies. In addition, observations of all other species of birds were recorded. The excellent, comprehensive, 319-page report is edited by A. D. Fox and D. A. Stroud and can be obtained, price £9.20, from the Greenland White-fronted Goose Study, c/o School of Biological Sciences, University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, Dyfed.

Ellesmere Island, Canada Following the Joint Services Expedition to Princess Marie Bay, Ellesmere Island, in 1980, a return visit took place from June to August 1981 to carry out a second season's study. The expedition members were joined by members of the Canadian Wildlife Service. One of the main ornithological aims was to study the breeding biology of waders, in particular Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii* and Knot *C. canutus*. Unfortunately, the 1981 breeding season was ten days earlier than in 1980, so most of the eggs had already hatched by the time the expedition arrived, only two complete clutches being found. Downy young were colour-ringed so that family groups could be followed through to fledging, and large numbers of both species were caught and useful growth data obtained. Plumage changes of adults and young were recorded as the family parties repeated the pattern of movement seen in 1980: from the valley where they had bred to the river mouth. The plumage of the

juveniles was stained yellow with picric acid to facilitate this part of the study. It was found that flocks of Knot fed at low tide and roosted on high ground. They were seen to strip seeds from sedges, which is apparently the first record of this behaviour. Baird's Sandpipers remained farther inland, feeding in the braided river system, and arrived at the river mouth later than the Knots. In addition, a colony of Ivory Gulls *Pagophila eburnea* was visited and detailed records made of the site and the gulls' behaviour. Other notable observations included the discovery of breeding Long-tailed Skuas *Stercorarius longicaudus*, the sighting of a juvenile Raven *Corvus corax*, and the first record of a Dunlin *Calidris alpina* for Ellesmere Island.

Belize The Royal Air Force Ornithological Society's expedition to Belize extended from February to April 1981. Some of the objectives of the expedition were achieved, whilst others could not be met due to lack of time. A study of hummingbird communities revealed some which did not appear to fit in with existing theories on the structure of these communities. In addition, over 300 species of birds were recorded and some 600 birds were trapped. Notable records included the first record of Chuck-Will's-Widow *Caprimulgus carolinensis* and the second record of American Oystercatcher *Haematopus palliatus* for Belize. Copies of the expedition report, edited by P. G. Jenkins, may be obtained from the Royal Air Force Ornithological Society, c/o MOD Defence Lands 3, Room 768, Tolworth Tower, Ewell Road, Surbiton, Surrey KT6 7DR.

Costa Rica From August to October 1981, a four-man team from Cambridge University (P. M. Lackie, M. J. Brisco, D. N. Hepper and C. H. Thomas) went to Costa Rica to study hummingbirds and, in particular, the flower *Hamelia patens* (Rubiaceae) and its pollination ecology. The study plants grew at the edge of a coffee and banana plantation in secondary forest and pasture at 1,400 m, and the team investigated, amongst other things, the seed-set produced by different visitors to the plants; the temporal and spatial pattern of visiting by hummingbirds, butterflies and bees; and the amount of sugar in the nectar. A full report will be produced, and those interested should contact Peter Lackie, c/o Trinity Hall, Cambridge CB2 1DJ.

Mark Beaman, 8 Albert Road East, Hale, Altrincham, Cheshire WA15 9AL.
R. F. Porter, c/o RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

Mystery photographs

76 Last month's warbler (plate 57, repeated here) should have been identified instantly by readers with long memories, for Irene Neufeldt's photograph originally appeared in *British Birds* some 15 years ago (60: plate 31a).

Let us, however, start from scratch. Even before identifying the species, we can deduce the approximate time of year: the warbler shows rather worn feathers, especially on its wing-coverts and tertials, so it is an adult, probably in late summer or autumn. Aren't we clever: the photograph was taken in July 1958 as this parent (actually the female) approached her nest with young.



Even allowing for wear, the tail is clearly not square-ended, the bill is quite deep and there is little sign of a supercilium and none of an eye-stripe or a lateral crown-stripe. This combination rules out Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*, all *Phylloscopus* warblers (since those that do not have square-ended tails and thin bills do have striking head-markings), and all *Hippolais* warblers (even though the dark eye set in a pale face rather recalls a *Hippolais*). Whilst the deep bill with curved culmen and the rather thick legs fit a *Sylvia* warbler, the majority of species in that genus have differing male and female plumages with even the females exhibiting more contrast in the head-pattern (and also usually the wing-pattern) than is shown by this bird. The head-pattern does greatly recall that number one featureless bird, the Garden Warbler *S. borin*, but the bill and especially the tail are both too long.

So, despite the unusually deep bill, we are clearly dealing with either a *Locustella* or an *Acrocephalus* warbler, since the species in both genera have the lateral tail feathers shorter than the central ones, resulting in tails which are strongly rounded or almost graduated. No *Locustella*, however, has quite such a deep bill; and there is only one *Acrocephalus* which shows this feature: Thick-billed Warbler *A. aedon*. As well as the bill, the bird's bulkiness and



73. Mystery photograph 77. Identify the species. Answer next month
vague structural resemblance to a Great Reed Warbler *A. arundinaceus*, and especially the distinctively featureless head-pattern, with almost no sign of a supercilium or an eye-stripe, confirm this identification. Great Reed Warbler is further eliminated from the reckoning by this bird's rather short, rounded wings, the primaries extending relatively little beyond the tertials, whereas those of Great Reed Warbler project as a distinct 'point'.

Only two Thick-billed Warblers have been found in Britain and Ireland so far, both in Shetland: the first on Fair Isle on 6th October 1955 (*Brit. Birds* 49: 89-93) and the second on Whalsay on 23rd September 1971. Vagrants to western Europe are likely to be in first-winter plumage, but behaviour as well as structure is likely to resemble those observed in their wintering range in the Far East. In Thailand in February 1982 and February 1983, I found the most distinctive features to be: (1) head recalling Garden Warbler with no supercilium or eye-stripe, so black eye standing out very prominently; and (2) slow, heavy movements in bushes, recalling actions (or inaction) of Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria* or Orphean Warbler *S. hortensis*, and sometimes feeding on ground rather like a shrike *Lanius* or a thrush *Turdus*. Although the head was always pale and usually a rather greyish-brown, the tail at least always seemed to have a slightly rufous tinge. The call was a harsh 'tac', reminding me of that of a Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

Seventy-five years ago...

'The Little Owl (*Athene noctua*) cannot now be regarded as anything more than an introduced species in these islands owing to the fact that so many have been "turned down" in various parts of the country. The interest in its possible migrations to England is, therefore, lost, and this is to be deplored, but there is undoubted value in tracing how it has spread from the various centres of its introduction.'

H. F. WITHERBY and N. F. TICEHURST (*Brit. Birds* 1: 335, April 1908)

Notes

Nesting association between Little Grebes and Moorhen, and aggression of Little Grebes

On 23rd May 1979, at Tadmarton, near Banbury, Oxfordshire, I found the nest of a Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* containing seven eggs built over water at the base of a sparse clump of bulrush *Typha latifolia* at the edge of a 0.25-ha artificial pond in open pasture. Exactly 1 m away was a shallow platform of weed on which, later in the day, I saw a pair of Little Grebes *Tachybaptus ruficollis* copulating, trilling and showing much interest in the site. On 27th May, the Moorhen was incubating and both grebes had a now-substantial nest; on 28th, I discovered eight eggs in the Moorhen's nest and one in the grebe's. At 07.00 GMT on 27th June, the adult Moorhen left the nest, followed by five chicks; three more chicks were dead in the water near the nest, and I recovered these and found them all to have severe head wounds; the grebe's nest held four eggs. Later that day, one grebe was on its nest and the other was swimming nearby, showing much aggression towards the Moorhen and her five chicks. On the morning of 14th June, the owner of the pond found two dead Moorhen chicks at the side of the pond near the nest. In the evening, I found two more floating dead among the bulrush ½ m from the grebe's nest and much damaged around their heads; there was no sign of an eighth chick; at my approach, the grebe covered her eggs and joined her mate on the pond. On 19th, both grebes were at the far end of the pond, and a substantial Moorhen's nest had been built over the grebe's nest; I parted this nest material and found four grebe eggs still in position and undamaged, each containing a dead, well-developed embryo. The next day, one Moorhen egg was in the nest, and the male and female were copulating on the bank nearby; both grebes were at the far end of the pool. On 22nd June, there were three Moorhen eggs; the grebes were nest-building 20 m from their original nest, in an overhanging clump of hard rush *Juncus inflexus* at the side of the pool, and later copulated on the nest platform. On 25th June, the Moorhen's nest was empty, but there was no indication of a predator; one egg was in the grebe's nest. On 30th, the grebe's nest was empty, and there was no sign of the birds on the pool.

The evidence, although circumstantial, points to the likelihood that the first brood of eight Moorhens was killed by the Little Grebes. Any other predator would surely have eaten the chicks after having killed them. I can find no mention in the literature of Little Grebes acting in this manner.

H. H. WILLIAMS

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Zigzagging Storm Petrels R. G. B. Brown (*Brit. Birds* 73: 263-264) noted a regular horizontal zigzag flight, without any vertical bounding, of what he presumed to be Madeiran Petrels *Oceanodroma castro*. This immediately

reminded me of a similar flight pattern by Storm Petrels *Hydrobates pelagicus* that I observed in June 1975, between Shetland and the Scottish mainland: although some showed a hurried, determined flight on a straight course, most flew in regular horizontal zigzags, perhaps about 8m across, only occasionally interrupted by a short backward loop at the end of a 'zig' or 'zag'.

Q. L. SLINGS

Jan Ligthartstraat 567, 1964 HR Heemskerk, Netherlands

P. J. Grant has commented as follows: 'This seems to endorse the view of Philip S. Watson (*Brit. Birds* 73: 230) that, while behaviour is a useful complement to other field identification characters, too much reliance on it is dangerous.' EDS

Herring Gulls in Israel Several hundred yellow-legged Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus* which I watched on the Mediterranean coast of Israel, south of Haifa, in late March and early April 1982 were originally presumed to be of the race *cachinnans* which is the common wintering gull from the Black Sea to the coasts of Egypt (Meinertzhagen 1954). The third volume of *BWP* indicates, however, that they must be *L. a. armenicus*, although that race is described as resident on Armenian lakes (USSR), in eastern Turkey and western Iran. They were consistently different both from British birds and from Herring Gulls of the race *michahellis* which I have watched in Spain and Majorca. S. C. Madge (*in litt.*) has since provided confirmation of my notes from his own recent experience in Israel, and both SCM and R. F. Porter have shown me colour transparencies of Israeli birds and others in the Yemen presumed to be *L. a. heuglini* which is one of the commonest gulls in winter in Iraq, the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Aden (Meinertzhagen 1954). Whereas *michahellis* shows extensive black wingtips with a large area of white (tip of outermost and subterminal spot on next primary), pale eyes with red orbital ring, and a rich yellow bill with a red spot, the birds in Israel had rather different features. Few adults were located (though SCM and RFP each saw more), but they all had just a subterminal white spot on the outermost primary and no more than a trace (if any) on the next, and the black area was extensive but more truncated or squared-off across the primaries instead of forming a longer triangle against the leading edge. The pattern in fig. 1 is based on a slide by SCM. There was no white scapular crescent. All adults and near-adults had superficially dark eyes, in fact on most they looked prominent and effectively black, but paler (never pale yellow) irises within a thick black outer ring were detected on one or two adults. All were white-headed, in immaculate plumage, and with vivid yellow legs, but all (adults



Fig. 1. Wing pattern of Israeli Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* (R. A. Hume)

included) had a black subterminal band on the bill as well as a red patch. SCM failed to find one amongst hundreds which lacked this black. My field notes indicate a rich, deep yellow bill with a deep red gonys spot often blending into the yellow, a black band or patch on the upper or both mandibles beyond the red and a pale yellow-green tip. Photographs of Herring Gulls in Israel taken by RFP in September 1980 do, however, show some with the black band on the basal edge of the red spot. Varieties are illustrated in fig. 2. All had a rather small bill and a neat round head, a

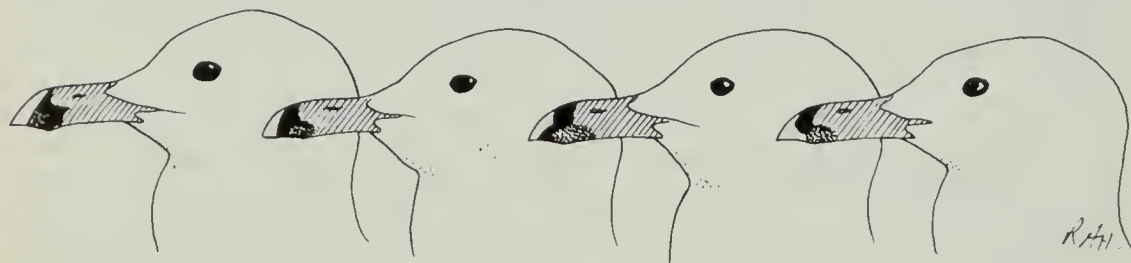


Fig. 2. Bill patterns of Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus* in Israel; left hand bird from photograph, September 1980; other three birds from field sketches, April 1982 (R. A. Hume)

slender body, and long tapered wingtips. Together with the very prominent dark eye and four-coloured bill, these features give a consistently very different appearance from *michahellis* and *argenteus*. Incidentally, neither *michahellis* nor these Israeli birds seem to me to look like the yellow-legged, white-headed individuals which I described from Staffordshire in winter (*Brit. Birds* 71: 338-345), though, undoubtedly, yellow-legged birds in southern England do look like *michahellis*. A Yemeni bird photographed by SCM looks—in comparison with the gentle, slightly-built Israeli birds—much heavier and altogether more coarsely built, with a large bill, angular

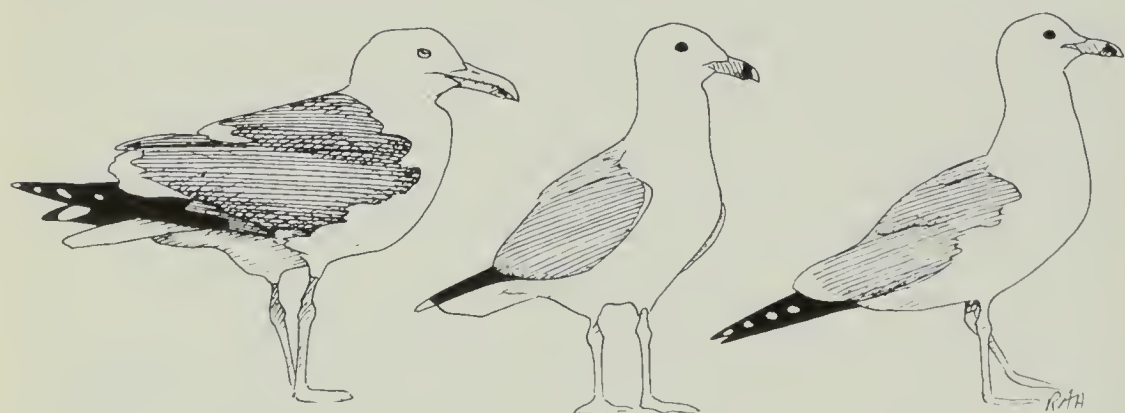


Fig. 3. Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus*: left hand bird probable *L. a. heuglini*, Yemen; other two birds probable *L. a. armenicus*, Israel (from photographs by S. C. Madge, drawn by R. A. Hume)

head, bulkier body and much longer legs. It had a prominent white scapular crescent and darker grey upperparts. Although not fully adult it already had a very pale iris. It is dangerous to draw general conclusions from such limited evidence, but these features seem to be fairly typical of *heuglini*. Side-by-side, I would suggest that that race (*heuglini*?), the Israeli birds (*armenicus*?) and *argenteus* would look at least as different as, say, *L. a. argenteus* and Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus graellsii*. Does *michahellis*

breed alongside *cachinnans* as it does alongside *argenteus* and *cachinnans* alongside *armenicus*?

R. A. HUME

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Yellow-legged Herring Gulls on southern North Sea shores In connection with the recent series of notes concerning the occurrence of Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus* with yellow legs in Britain (see also note below), it is perhaps interesting to note that in recent years large and increasing numbers of these birds have visited the Belgian coast in late summer. Thus, on 20th July 1980, I counted 530 on the beach at La Panne, near the French border. The consistent characters of uniformly large size and rather dark upperparts, the constant combination of red orbital ring and bright deep yellow legs, and mostly the large amount of black in the primaries, with a grey, wedge-shaped 'tongue' in the 10th (outermost) primary, indicate clearly that the adults belong to the yellow-legged Mediterranean race of Herring Gull *L. a. michahellis*, not to the Baltic *L. a. 'omissus'* which has lighter upperparts and much less black in the primaries, or the Pontic *L. a. cachinnans*, also lighter and with a long, broad white 'tongue' on the 10th primary. Occasional *L. a. argentatus* have pale yellow or yellowish legs (personal observations) and some are reported to have bright yellow legs (Barth 1968), but not consistently combined with a red orbital ring (Barth 1968), and in any case *L. a. argentatus* has much less black on the primaries than does *L. a. michahellis*. The juvenile plumage, with characters of both Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus* and Herring Gull *L. a. argentatus*, as well as specific traits, and the sequence of immature plumages (some easily confused with Great Black-backed Gull *L. marinus*) also fit the identification (Grant 1980). The southern origin of the birds was further confirmed during a short survey of the northern French coast in late August 1979, when I found yellow-legged Herring Gulls to be by far the most numerous gull on the mud-flats of the Baie du Mont St Michel, and to outnumber pink-legged Herring Gulls and Lesser Black-backed Gulls as far north as the Canche Estuary south of Boulogne. Most seem to belong to the west Mediterranean population of very large birds (Isenmann 1973), not to the Atlantic population of northwestern Spain and Portugal characterised by small size (personal observation). A specimen taken in Belgium in 1979 conforms perfectly in measurements, upperparts colour and primary pattern to specimens from the west Mediterranean. Some smaller and lighter individuals are, however, also seen in Belgium, and two of these have been collected; they probably belong to the population of smaller *michahellis* breeding farther east in the Mediterranean, some perhaps coming from as far as the eastern Balkans, where intergradation with *L. a. cachinnans* seems to occur (specimens in Zool. Museum Alexander Koenig, Bonn).

This late summer influx of yellow-legged Herring Gulls is certainly not a new phenomenon, as indications of it can be found in the Belgian literature since 1952. It must have also involved Britain. There has unquestionably

been a recent increase in number of summer visitors, probably connected with a general trend in the subspecies' abundance, as in the recent installation of west Mediterranean birds on the Vendée coast of France (Nicolau-Guillaumet 1977). It is, of course, not the movements of the very few birds breeding there that are responsible for the appearance of large numbers on the North Sea, but the general northward post-breeding dispersal of portions of probably the entire Mediterranean population, movement also evidenced by the build-up of numbers at the same season on the Swiss lakes (e.g. G  roudet 1979).

I am currently concluding a taxonomic review of the *argentatus* complex in western Eurasia (*Le Gerfaut*, in prep.) and consider the forms occurring in western Europe as best assigned to three species: *L. fuscus* (with races *graellsii*, *intermedius*, *fuscus*, *heuglini*, *taimyrensis*), *L. cachinnans* (with races *atlantis*, *micahellis*, *cachinnans*, *barabensis*, *mongolicus*, *?omissus*) and *L. argentatus* (with races *smithsonianus*, *argenteus*, *argentatus*), an arrangement already chosen by Dwight (1925) and Alexander (1955) among others. I use 'omissus' to designate the yellow-legged gulls breeding in the eastern Baltic-White Sea area (e.g. Voipio 1954, Kumari 1978), not (*contra* Witherby 1941) the pink-legged, large, *L. a. argentatus* of northern Norway and the Murmansk coast. Fair numbers of *L. (c.?) omissus* are ringed in eastern Europe and none seems to have been recovered so far on the western European seaboard beyond Denmark. In the late winter of 1980, however, I photographed an adult yellow-legged gull in the Netherlands that showed the characteristics of this form. Its occasional presence is to be expected.

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Yellow-legged Herring Gulls in Britain This note summarises the response to a request which accompanied several contributions concerning the identification and distribution in northwestern Europe of Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus* with yellow legs (*Brit. Birds* 73: 349-353, corrected 74: 552). A contribution by Dr P. Devillers is published separately (pages 191-192).

There are two further northwest European recoveries of *L. a. michahellis* ringed as nestlings in the Mediterranean, complementing the two of *L. a. cachinnans* and two of *michahellis* cited by Redman (1981): one ringed on Islas Medas, off Estartit, Gerona, Spain, on 24th April 1977 and found dead at Cliffe, Kent, on 16th November 1980 (BTO per R. Hudson), thus the first firm evidence in favour of the addition of *michahellis* to the British List; and another ringed in Yugoslavia on 6th June 1964 and recovered on the island of Marken, Netherlands, in August 1965 (Herroelen 1981).

As discussed later, it is not always possible to be sure of the subspecific identity of individuals, but the following series of observations of yellow-legged Herring Gulls probably involves *michahellis/cachinnans*, judging from field descriptions and photographic evidence:

By far the largest numbers in Britain were reported in the Adur Valley (especially at the Small Dole refuse tip), West Sussex, between 14th July and 25th December 1981; monthly peak counts were: July one; August 47 (on 30th); September 25; October eight; November four; and December one (*Shoreham District Ornithological Society Report for 1981*). One individual, of unknown origin, bore a large green ring on the left leg and a small metal one on the right. At Pagham, West Sussex, there was one on 19th August and 20 on 16th October (*Pagham Harbour Report, 1981*). R. Henson (*in litt.*), on visits to Boulogne, France, counted three on 12th July, at least 15 on dates between 19th July and 27th September (26 on 31st August), and eight on 25th October 1981; and at Dungeness, Kent, up to three between the end of June and 24th October 1981. Singles were seen at Sidlesham Ferry, West Sussex, on 17th August (O. Laugharne, K. Noble *in litt.*), and Beenham, Berkshire, on 18th December 1981 (A. J. Croucher *in litt.*). P. J. Strangeman (*in litt.*) has kept regular observations on the Thames between Lambeth and Westminster bridges, Greater London, since 1968: his first record there of a yellow-legged Herring Gull was in 1976, and since then there has been one in 1978, five in both 1979 and 1980, and three in 1981. Elsewhere in the Thames valley in Greater London, he has seen 13 others between 1977 and 1980. Of the total of 28 individuals, 23 occurred during the second half of the year.

This and previous ringing and observational evidence confirm that *michahellis* (and possibly *cachinnans*) is regularly reaching southern Britain, as part of the northerly or northwesterly post-breeding dispersal from the Mediterranean to northwestern Europe, with at least some remaining through the winter. While observations strongly imply that this is a migration which has developed only during the past decade (and there can be little doubt that at least the numbers involved have increased considerably), the two ringing recoveries in northwestern Europe of *cachinnans* ringed as nestlings as early as 1952 and 1953 (Redman 1981) should not be forgotten, and Dr J. Van Impe (*in litt.*) reports that yellow-legged Herring Gulls were seen in Belgium in the 1950s and that he saw five to ten individuals there during early autumn and winter throughout the 1960s. It is possible that the pattern reflects only the increased birdwatching coverage and interest in gulls.

Reasonable agreement on the appearance of a typical adult *michahellis* has emerged. It averages about the same size or larger than British *L. a. argenteus* (but note that individual—mainly sexual—variation in size of Herring Gulls does not make assessment easy, even in mixed flocks); upperparts coloration is rather consistent and similar to that of Common Gull *L. canus* (thus darker, more blue-grey than *argenteus*); bill bright yellow or orange-yellow, with bright red spot near gonys (pale yellow with orange spot on typical *argenteus*); bright yellow legs, often less bright than bill, and

varying from orange-yellow through lemon-yellow to weak cream (pink on *argenteus*); orbital ring red (yellow or orange on *argenteus*); head white or with grey smudge around eye or very faintly streaked in winter (noticeably or heavily streaked on typical *argenteus*). The subjectivity of judging structure (and size of lone birds), and the practical difficulties of observing details of wing-tip pattern, make distinctions involving these features less useful. Special care should be taken, too, on comparative assessments of grey tones, which can be altered by the angle of the bird's body in relation to the observer. Also subtle tonal differences are lost in bright sunlight, so comparisons are best made in overcast conditions. It should be stressed that, although a classic adult *michahellis/cachinnans* may be distinguishable, several observers reported considerable variation, especially in bare parts coloration, in both northwest European flocks and in Mediterranean populations of *michahellis*. This situation emphasises that it will often be impossible to assign some individuals to subspecies.

G. J. Oreel (*in litt.*) has drawn attention to another case of *argenteus* with yellow legs (see P. J. Oliver, *Brit. Birds* 74: 353), in Dorset in June 1948, described by K. B. Rooke as having 'deep yellow legs and feet' (*Brit. Birds* 42: 29-30).

In addition to those acknowledged above, I thank W. H. Dady, Paul de Heer, S. Holdsworth, G. G. Koerkamp, H. & M-L. Meeus, Dr J. A. Newnham, I. M. Spence and E. Still for their records, advice and opinions. I am specially grateful to Raymond Henson, K. Noble and Dr Barrie Watson for amending and adding to a first draft of this note. P. J. GRANT
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REDMAN, P. S. 1981. Yellow-legged Herring Gulls in France and Britain. *Brit. Birds* 74: 349-350.

Letters

Refrigeration and the 'Hastings rarities' One of the more contentious areas of both the *British Birds* papers concerning the 'Hastings rarities', and the late Dr James M. Harrison's book *Bristow and the Hastings Rarities Affair* (1968) involved refrigeration and whether or not birds were ever imported 'on ice'. It was Dr Harrison's opinion that this was unlikely to have happened, and that refrigeration was technically impossible during the period in question.

The following is a quotation from the book *Sunny Dover* (1894) by C. T. Paske, a bird collector and Deputy Surgeon General. 'It is now easy enough to transmit the skins of birds home from warm climates, though in the East I lost collection after collection in spite of liberal use of arsenical soap, camphor and spices. Mr. Gray, a Dover naturalist, recently called my attention to a bird that he had received from a great distance as fresh as when it was killed. I was as puzzled to account for it as himself, until an explanation was soon offered by the owner who arrived shortly after. The

bird had travelled in the "cold room". We shall soon bring corpses home from India for burial, refrigerating even as the Egyptians embalmed!"

This does seem well-qualified contemporary evidence that refrigerated importation of birds was possible, and that it actually was taking place at the time.

A. J. GREENLAND

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We should also draw attention to a recent publication of the National Maritime Museum (Monograph no. 49, 1981: *Ice-carrying Trade at Sea*, edited by D. V. Proctor), which shows that, by the 1850s, there was no shortage of ice world-wide to provide cold-storage facilities on land and at sea. Thousands of tons were shipped each winter from Boston, and other East Coast ports in the U.S.A., to the West Indies, South America, Europe, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), India, Australia and the Far East. As early as 1810, sufficient ice was reaching Calcutta to provide a year-round supply. It was carried in the holds of ordinary wooden sailing ships, and stored on land in insulated wooden buildings and underground 'ice-houses'. The first domestic refrigerators for food storage were being sold by that name in England in 1815. Essentially double-skinned boxes, it was stated that the original lump of ice provided would take several weeks, and perhaps months, to melt. There seems little doubt that these were the forerunners of the ship's 'cold room'. Ems

County bird reports: what use are they? May I take some space in your journal to reply to the 'Points of view' by Dr A. G. Duff on the use (or abuse!) of county bird reports (*Brit. Birds* 75: 223).

Personally I could not care less whether or not my observations contribute to some vast amorphous fund of 'ornithological knowledge'. Looking through bird journals these days, dare I say that ornithology seems to be grossly overloaded with PhDs—perhaps an interest in birds denotes intelligence!—writing boring and often virtually incomprehensible articles on obscure pieces of ornithological research. Once again, we have the noble subsidised scientist pursuing his/her lofty aims with no regard for the wider implications.

Bring back interest and readability! Nothing like a touch of controversy and (naughty word) subjectivity to stimulate people, whereas I for one am getting bored rigid by masses of 'scientific' papers, doubtless fascinating to other scientists but not exactly pulse-racing stuff for the ordinary reader.

Our current obsession with the buzz word 'science' has increasingly meant a loss of variety, interest to the lay person and general accessibility. After all it's hard to disagree with a statistical table on the size of Capercaillie cocks or whatever (and never will I forget the sheer joy of reading 'Chaffinch with cnemidocoptic mange' in these very pages, albeit over 20 years ago!). Take a look at the old-fashioned, outmoded and highly subjective works of Howard Saunders, Bannerman and others, then try curling up for an evening with *BWP*: I suspect you will see what I mean.

County bird reports exist primarily simply as a reflection of people's interest in and awareness of birds. Whether or not this interest as written down has any scientific value is really irrelevant: if it has, then terrific; if not, too bad. Perhaps I'm in a minority these days when I say that I like seeing local records, my own and other people's, and I would hate to see them becoming standardised and buried under enormous columns of dry academic figures. Birding is mainly for enjoyment, though twitchers might

at times disagree; and over-specialisation has reputedly led to the extinction of numerous other forms: don't let it happen to bird literature and publications!

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The point of view expressed by Dr A. G. Duff concerning the questionable usefulness of county birds reports (*Brit. Birds* 75: 223) embodied some interesting arguments. Even so, I think that he is over-pessimistic.

For the past five years I have been responsible for compiling the systematic list for the *Sussex Bird Report* and, as I have explained to the members of that Society, have aspired to one ideal, that of packing in as much information as might enable the compilers of the next county avifauna to use those pages instead of having to refer to the record files. In so doing, I have made every effort to ensure that the text has been readable, so that the non-expert could both understand and learn from it. Wherever appropriate, I added comment or explanation; in some instances, brief analysis and interpretations were specially intended for note at a less parochial level, and, in others, the text was designed to guide members towards topics requiring more fieldwork. It all took a lot of extra effort, but the reaction of the readership, expert and non-expert alike, made it worthwhile. I agree with Dr Duff that, provided sufficient data are available relating to one topic, they should be tabulated for the sake of future researchers. I do not agree that the presentation of data should be wholly standardised; even the scientists seem to argue over their favourite methodologies. I should prefer that common sense be allowed to prevail at local level.

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Announcements

AOU Centennial Meeting The American Ornithologists' Union will hold its Centennial Meeting at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, during 25th September to 1st October 1983. There will be a special Centennial Day with a Symposium, plus varied scientific and social events to mark the occasion of its founding, in late September 1883, at the American Museum of Natural History. The AOU would especially welcome attendance and participation by members of sister ornithological societies all over the world. For further information, contact the Local Committee Chairman, Lester L. Short, or the Scientific Program Committee Chairman, George Barrowclough, at the American Museum of Natural History, New York, New York 10024, USA.

Cover designs for sale by postal auction Each month's cover is offered for postal auction (see page 40 in January issue and the outside back cover each month). Sometimes, however, no bids are received, often, we suspect, because readers feel that well-known artists' work will reach a higher price than they can afford. When this happens in future, we shall list those

available so that readers have a second chance. The following original drawings used on *BB* covers are available:

Artist	Subject	Issue
D. A. Thelwell	Black Grouse	October 1978
Keith Brockie	Purple Sandpipers	November 1978
Norman Arlott	Canada Geese	March 1979
Martin Woodcock	Redstart	April 1979
Wayne Ford	Great Spotted Woodpecker	September 1982

Send in your bid, following the usual procedure. Remember, successful bids have varied from £10 to £100 (average £35), so you could pick up a real bargain!

Requests

Birds in central northern France Many British ornithologists have visited Champagne, especially the large lakes of Der-Chantecoq and Forêt d'Orient. The Centre Ornithologique Champagne-Ardenne would be very grateful for details of observations in the four French departments of Ardennes, Aube, Marne, and Haute-Marne. Notes should be sent to COCA, c/o Mr Alain Sauvage, 14 Porte de Bourgogne, 08000 Charleville-Mézières, France.

Philippines records To assist in the collation of information to highlight threatened bird species, any birders who have visited the Philippines in the past five years are asked to send their records to T. H. Fisher, c/o Jadine Nell Corporation, 325 Buendia Avenue, Makati, Manila, Philippines.

Atlassing in Italy Helpers are needed with the breeding bird atlas survey of Italy. Ornithologists (preferably with previous experience of breeding bird atlas fieldwork) willing to carry out fieldwork, in under-recorded areas of Italy to which they are directed, for one or more weeks during May-July 1983 or 1984, may be eligible for some financial assistance towards travel and other expenses. This is a marvellous opportunity for individuals and small teams of dedicated workers to make major contributions to the knowledge of European bird distribution and at the same time to have very enjoyable—though strenuous—birdwatching holidays. The emphasis will be on passerines, which are especially under-recorded in many parts of Italy. Anyone interested should write, indicating availability and experience, and supplying the name of an ornithological referee, to Professor Sergio Frugis, Istituto di Zoologia, Università di Parma, Via Dell'Università 12, 43100 Parma, Italy. Anyone able to help at short notice should telephone Professor Frugis at Parma (010 39 521) 24390.

News and comment

Mike Everett and Robin Prytherch

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

The Verney affair Many conservationists were shocked to learn that Sir Ralph Verney is not to be reappointed Chairman of the Nature Conservancy Council when his term expires this April. This is widely seen as a political sacking following the NCC's decision to designate West Sedgemoor a Site

of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in the face of opposition from landowners, farmers and certain prominent Tory MPs. Often criticised as a conservation watchdog with no teeth and only an occasional bark, the NCC made a firm stand this time—and seems to have lost its Chairman as a result. It is not

only the cynical who will smell a rat in this case: the extent to which the Government will honour its statutory commitments is still in doubt and what looks suspiciously like a desire to replace Sir Ralph with a 'yes-man' must give us all cause for concern.

Seal Sands Many readers will know Seal Sands, Cleveland, for its rarities and its industrial setting; only 400 acres of the original Tees Estuary remain, but it is still an internationally important site for Shelducks *Tadorna tadorna*, Knots *Calidris canutus* and Redshanks *Tringa totanus*. Despite winning a well-argued public debate in 1975 when the local structure plan was considered, conservation bodies have remained alert to the possibility of further reclamation. The Tees and Hartlepool Port Authority have now made a move which, if successful, will result in the reclamation of the last tidal acres. They are promoting a Private Members Bill in Parliament to extend the time limit for reclamation, which at present expires in 1984. The Bill is being opposed by the RSPB and the Cleveland Nature Conservation Trust, who point out that over 600 acres of reclaimed land lie idle and unused, so the need to reclaim more has not been demonstrated. For more information contact Conservation Planning Department, RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL. (Contributed by Stuart Housden)

Land drainage and birds An RSPB report highlights the detrimental impact of land drainage improvement schemes on wetland bird populations in England and Wales. It concludes that, as breeding species, Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* and Redshanks *Tringa totanus* are imperilled outside a handful of key nature reserves. The report goes on to investigate the economics of land drainage. Under the present system, each scheme is subjected to a cost-benefit appraisal to decide its worth. Faults in the appraisal methodology, however, mean that, while the typical project is shown as achieving more than the required financial return of 5%, many in fact return only 2-3%. In 1980-81, public expenditure on land drainage was about £152 million. 'Put bluntly, many projects are a waste of money and not in the public interest to grant-aid even without taking nature conservation into account' says the report. Because the Ministry of Agriculture and drainage authorities treat these cost-benefit appraisals as confidential, these flaws have

only recently come to light. Copies of the report (£3 incl. postage) are available from RSPB Conservation Planning Department, address as above. (Contributed by Gwyn Williams)

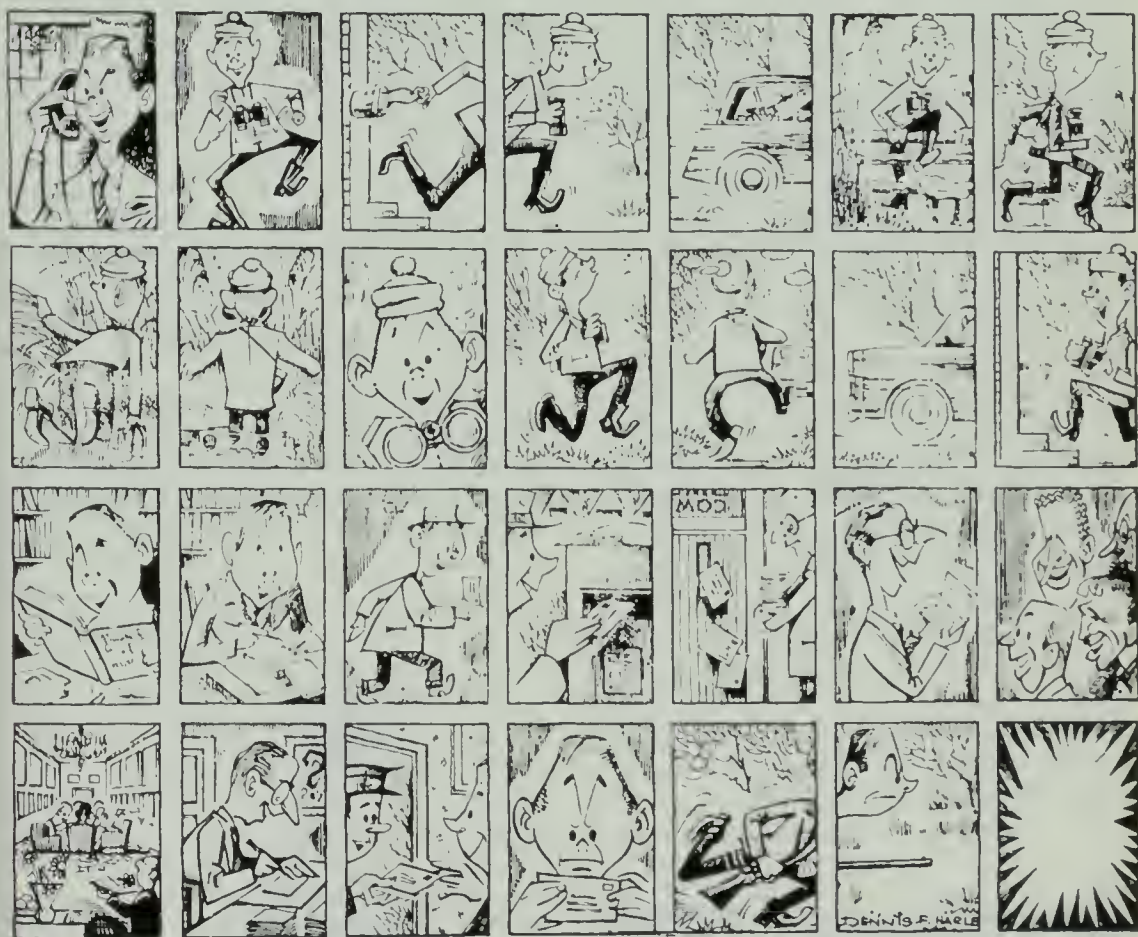
Shetland Agricultural Plan Those lucky enough to have visited Shetland—and indeed those who have yet to experience its beauty and birds—will welcome the principle of investing income from a non-renewable resource (oil) in the future of a renewable resource (agriculture). This is the idea behind the 10-year Agricultural Plan produced by the Shetland Islands Council which provides for around £10 million in loan capital and grants to be made available by the Council for agricultural improvement. Unfortunately, neither the Nature Conservancy Council nor any other conservation body was consulted during the preparation of this plan and there is no mention in it whatsoever about any possible environmental effects. Proposals for hill-land improvement by means of fencing, drainage and reseeding give most cause for concern as they could seriously affect, in particular, the moorland of Unst and Fetlar, which holds the bulk of the British breeding population of Whimbrels *Numenius phaeopus*, as well as important numbers of breeding Arctic Skuas *Stercorarius parasiticus*. The Council needs to be told about this: you can help by writing to The Convenor, Shetland Islands Council, Town Hall, Lerwick. (Contributed by David Minns)

New publications The 1981 Northumberland Bird Report *Birds in Northumbria* is now available via the Tyneside Bird Club (Secretary: K. G. Dures, 5 Bath Terrace, Tynewmouth, Tyne and Wear), price £2.75. Yet another interesting account of birds at sea comes from the North Sea Bird Club: their 1981 report is also now available from Ms L. Etheridge, Britoil Ltd, St Machar House, 73-77 College Street, Aberdeen AB9 1AR, price £2. Stephen Riley, of the RSPB Southport Members' Group, has produced a most useful booklet *A Guide to Birds and Birdwatching in the Southport Area*: copies from Steve, 25 Abbots Way, Formby, Merseyside, price £1.10 (incl. p & p). Finally, we must also mention *A Guide to Gower Birds*, a most attractive little book written by Harold Grenfell and Derek Thomas for the Gower Ornithological Society and the Glamorgan Naturalists' Trust: available from the Trust, c/o 'Hunter's Hollow', Penmaen, Swansea, price £3.80 (incl. p & p).

Fan-tailed Warblers at Calais Peter Grant tells us that, on 9th December 1982, A. J. Greenland, Mr and Mrs I. P. Hodgson and he found 14 Fan-tailed Warblers *Cisticola juncidis* on the coastal marshes about 2km north of the hoverport at Calais (France). Although smaller numbers have been seen in recent years, reflecting this species' continuing northward spread in Europe, this count is apparently unprecedented for the area. Of particular interest is that 12 birds were in a loose flock in an extensive area of pure reed canary-grass *Phalaris arundinacea*. With such

high numbers so near to us, it might just be worth looking at similar areas of this distinctive habitat in Britain . . .

Michigan Prairie Falcon Michigan, USA, birders are anxious to have details of the State's first Prairie Falcon *Falco mexicanus*, apparently found at Erie Marsh by some unknown English birders in either May 1977 or May 1978. Anyone who can help is asked to write to Terry Box, Checkmate, Norville Lane, Cheddar, Somerset BS27 3HJ.



Dennis Harle We were very pleased to hear that Kent artist Dennis Harle has now almost fully recovered from a three-year illness which has affected his eyesight and prevented him from drawing and painting. Dennis's cartoons are especially well known in birding circles and we are pleased to reproduce one of his classics here: although the faces have changed (the cartoon was drawn shortly after the formation of the Rarities Committee in 1959) the humour is just as sharp 25 years later. Well done, Dennis! (Contributed by PJG)



Roy Coles BEM Our warmest congratulations to Kent ornithologist Roy Coles, who received the BEM in the New Year Honours list for his work in Government service, his innovations in aids for the disabled and his voluntary efforts over many years in nature conservation—his work at Bough Beech Reservoir is especially well known. *BB* readers will also know him for his excellent photographs which we have published from time to time. Clearly, Roy is a man of many talents!

R & M Conference The 15th annual BTO Ringing and Migration Conference, held at Swanwick, Derbyshire, from 7th-9th January 1983, broke all records with an attendance of some 400 people who consumed no less than 1,850 pints of beer from Friday evening to some time rather early on Sunday morning. In between the valuable informal discussions held over all those pints came an interesting and varied programme of lectures, plus meetings for enthusiasts on waders, micro-computers and 'constant effort' ringing-sites. The conference was tinged with a little sadness because it marked the imminent retirement from the BTO of Bob Spencer, who has been head of the ringing scheme for 28 years. A presentation was made to him which gave the assembled company the opportunity for a public acknowledgment of the immense debt which

they and all bird ringers owe to him. Without doubt, the lecture highlight was that by Dr Peter Bethold, Director of the Max-Planck Institute of Behavioural Research at Radolfzell, West Germany. He gave a lucid and wholly fascinating account of the last ten years of research into the ways in which the migration of small birds, particularly warblers, is controlled. The internal biological clocks of the birds continue to dictate to them when they should moult, put on weight or set off on migration, even when they have been reared and kept in an environment devoid of external stimuli. Other talks ranged over such diverse subjects as seabird counts in the North Sea, Mute Swans in the Outer Hebrides, Choughs on Bardsey, Wood Warblers in Hertfordshire and flat-flies on birds.

The *BB* mystery photograph competition attracted 65 entries of which three, from Pete Kinnear, John Marchant and Moss Taylor, were completely correct. On the draw, the last-named won the traditional bottle of champagne. (*Contributed by MAO*)

New recorder for Northamptonshire

Robert W. Bullock, 25 Westcott Way, Favell Green, Northampton NN3 3BE, has taken over from C. J. Coe as recorder for Northamptonshire.

Recent reports

K. Allsopp and R. A. Hume

These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records

All dates refer to January, unless otherwise stated.

Wet, very windy westerly weather was the dominant feature of the month, with temperatures being above the monthly average. An anti-cyclonic period from 18th to 23rd brought colder but more settled weather.



Divers and wildfowl

A large shoal of sprats was thought responsible for concentrating **Red-throated Divers** *Gavia stellata* off the Suffolk coast, where 675 were counted on 10th, and a **White-billed Diver** *G. adamsii* was reported from Whalsay (Shetland). **King Eiders** *Somateria spectabilis*, another Arctic Ocean breeding species, were seen at Lerwick and at Colgrave Sound (both Shetland), at Kirkwall (Orkney) and at Ballycastle (Co. Mayo) on 3rd. Fewer reports of Nearctic wildfowl have been received than in past winters: a **Ring-necked Duck** *Aythya collaris* at Welshpool (Powys), **American Wigeon** *Anas americana* in Northamptonshire and on the River Erme (Devon) on 28th, and a **Teal** *A. crecca* of the Nearctic race *carolinensis* at Cahore (Co. Wexford) on 15th, were the only records.

Rarer European ducks seen were **Ferruginous Ducks** *Aythya nyroca*, with two still present at Slapton Ley (Devon), one at Blunham (Bedfordshire) on 24th and another at Kingsbury Water Park (Warwickshire), and a **Red-crested Pochard** *Netta rufina* at Harrold Gravel-pits (Bedfordshire) on 29th. **Smews** *Mergus albellus*, normally wintering in England, were reported from Orkney, Tobermory (Strathclyde) and Dumfries.

Gulls and skuas

The main feature of the month was the invasion of **Iceland Gulls** *Larus glaucoides*. Shetland had most, with 22 at Scalloway, and tens at Tingwall and Sumburgh, with small parties at other locations. Orkney reported 25, eight were seen in the Inner Hebrides and also eight on the Irish east coast. Three were found in Devon and, inland, three at Chasewater (West Midlands) and one at Blithfield Reservoir (Staffordshire) and another at Swithland Reservoir (Leicestershire) on 5th February. **Glaucous Gulls** *L. hyperboreus* were not so numerous, with fewer than normal in Shetland. The Irish Sea coasts reported most, with 15 off Ireland and four off Lancashire and, inland, four were in the West Midlands. The strong westerlies were probably responsible for even more **Ring-billed Gulls** *L. delawarensis* records—five, all adults, were counted on Bellast Lough on 15th, and others at Aberystwyth (Dyfed) on 11th and 12th, at Chew Valley Lake (Avon) and on Tice (Strathclyde). The latter was found when a sandwich inadvertently dropped overboard

from a ship attracted a flock of gulls—the subsequent sacrifice of the remaining lunch, however, failed to reattract the bird after it had flown to rest on the shore. **Ross's Gulls** *Rhodostethia rosea*, now expected winter rarities, were found at Scalloway from 26th December until 26th, Sumburgh on 22nd, at Southport (Merseyside) on 17th and in Ireland at Ramore Head (Co. Antrim) on 19th and Kilmore Quay (Co. Wexford) on 22nd. Other Nearctic species reported were a **Laughing Gull** *Larus atricilla* in Scotland and a **Franklin's Gull** *L. pipixcan* at Aberystwyth, while the **Forster's Tern** *Sterna forsteri* was still to be found in Dublin Bay. A **Sabine's Gull** *Larus sabini* was a notable winter find on Islay (Strathclyde) on 14th. Wintering **Pomarine Skuas** *Stercorarius pomarinus* were recorded on the north Suffolk coast, at Walney (Cumbria) on 7th and 16th and at Blackpool (Lancashire) on 6th. These last two localities also reported three **Great Skuas** *S. skua* and a flock of 30 **Little Gulls** *Larus minutus* at Blackpool on 11th.

Wading birds

A **Killdeer** *Charadrius vociferus* stayed briefly at Bo'ness (Central) at the turn of the year and the wintering **Dotterel** *C. morinellus* was relocated at Wigborough (Essex) on 23rd. The **Western Sandpiper** *Calidris mauri*, still viewed with suspicion, was still being seen at Felixstowe (Suffolk), with observers watching closely for changes in plumage, as was the **Baird's Sandpiper** *C. bairdii* at Staines Reservoir (Surrey). An immature **Grey Phalarope** *Phalaropus fulicarius* was a surprise visitor to Rutland Water (Leicestershire) on 29th. A few **Night Herons** *Nycticorax nycticorax* are found each winter, one being at Bere Alston (Devon) on 3rd.

Passerines

A very unusual record was of a **Red-breasted Flycatcher** *Ficedula parva* at Powys Castle (Powys) on 31st; with its normal food supply being increasingly difficult to find in the winter, survival would seem unlikely. A **Rock Thrush** *Monticola saxatilis*, a mountain species, might, however, fare better at Minster (Kent), where it was seen on 2nd February. Several **Whinchats** *Saxicola rubetra* and **Wheatears** *Oenanthe oenanthe* were reported to be overwintering, as were 14 **Firecrests** *Regulus ignicapillus* at Slapton Ley on 2nd. **Parrot Crossbills** *Loxia pytyopsittacus*, in addition to those at Howden Reservoir (South Yorkshire/Derbyshire), were confusing watchers at Crowthorne (Berkshire)



74. Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis*, Kent, February 1983 (David M. Coltridge)

where four were identified. A **Two-barred Crossbill** *L. leucoptera* was also seen in Derbyshire.

Birds of prey and others

A buzzard rumoured to be present in Bedfordshire since the autumn was identified as a **Rough-legged** *Buteo lagopus* when the experts located it on 8th. The Irish **Gyr Falcon** *Falco rusticolus* was still present, located at Longfield Point (Co. Derry) on 17th. A **Swift** *Apus apus* at Margate (Kent) at the end of January was most unusual as aerial insects must have been scarce. Also at the end of the

month **Little Auks** *Alle alle* were becoming increasingly numerous in Shetland and, subsequently, in the North Sea.

Latest news

The only major rarity was an adult **Rose-coloured Starling** *Sturnus roseus* at Deeping St James (Lincolnshire). The first summer migrants included the odd **Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia* and **Swallow** *Hirundo rustica* on the English south coast, a couple of **Hoopoes** *Upupa epops* in Cornwall and a spate of **Firecrests** in the south, particularly at Dungeness (Kent), on 12th March.

75. Little Auk *Alle alle*, North Yorkshire, February 1983 (P. J. Dunn)



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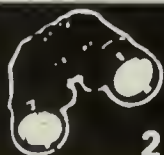
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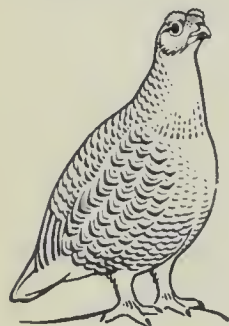
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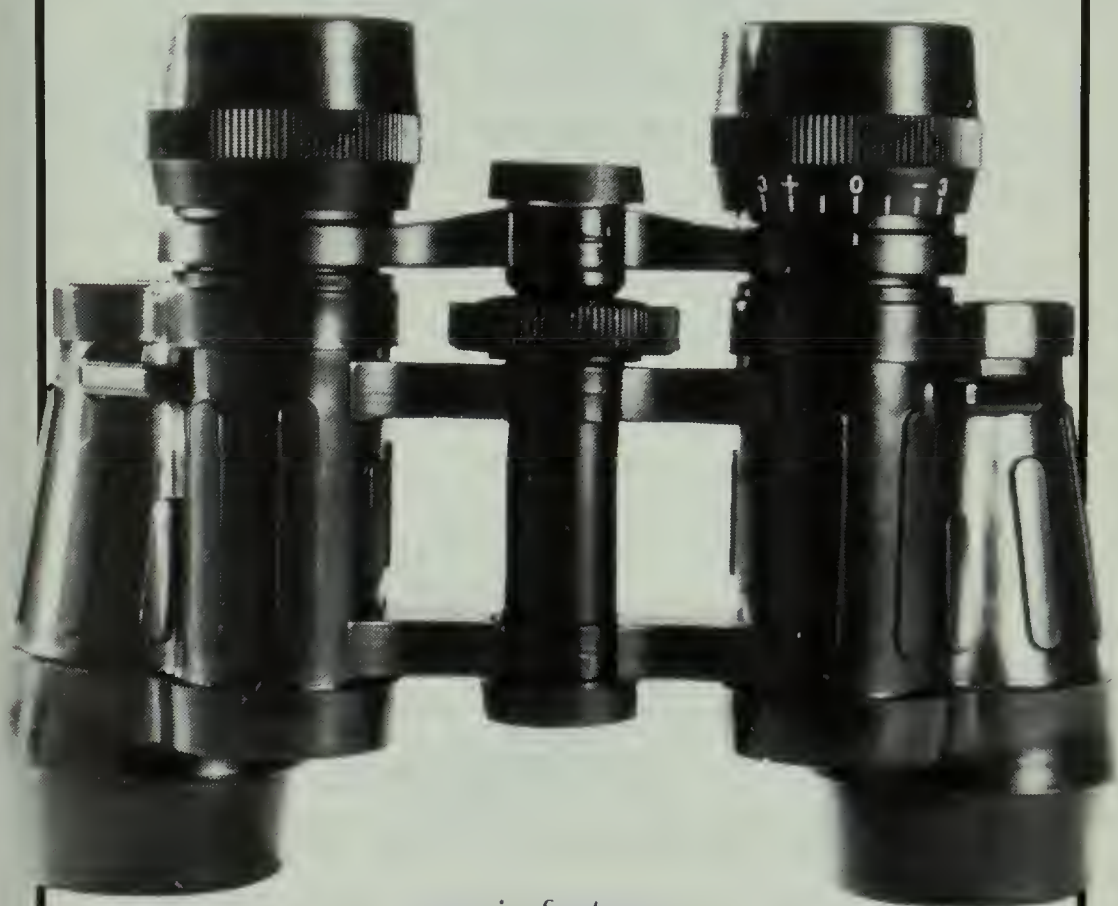
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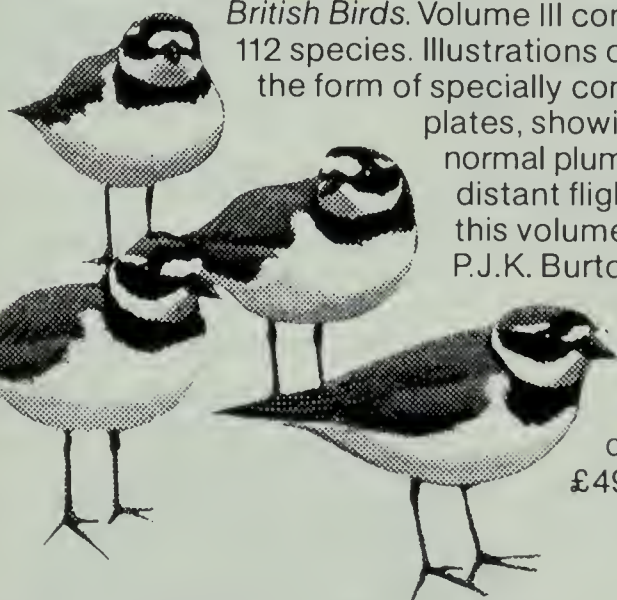
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British Birds

VOLUME 76 NUMBER 5 MAY 1983



BTO is 50 years old

The British Trust for Ornithology is 50 years old this month, and we take this opportunity to salute its Golden Jubilee. We do this not without a certain degree of pride, for it was within these pages, in the issue of May 1933, that there appeared a letter over the names of eight very distinguished ornithologists, including H. F. Witherby and F. C. R. Jourdain, announcing the formation of the Trust, and appealing for funds. The Hon. Treasurer of the infant Trust was B. W. Tucker, and its acting Hon. Secretary E. M. Nicholson, both to give enormously of their time and effort to both *British Birds* and the Trust in the years that followed.

We offer our congratulations to the BTO on its great achievements of the past 50 years. The Trust has established itself in a leading position among national ornithological organisations, with a well-deserved high reputation in such fields as population studies, distribution mapping, bird ringing, and habitat surveys; its journal, *Bird Study*, is now in its 30th volume. The Trust has developed a combination of professional staff and amateur field workers that is admired throughout the ornithological world. We are proud to have been involved with the BTO's formation and delighted now to be able to send the Trust our best wishes for the next 50 years. We look forward to the continuation of the friendly co-operation that has always existed between us. EDS

Identification pitfalls and assessment problems

4 Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis*

Once known, the Buff-breasted Sandpiper should not present an identification problem: the only confusion might be with a juvenile Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*, especially a small female. Unlike the Ruff, the Buff-breasted Sandpiper is a *small* wader; although males average slightly larger than females, it is only slightly taller than a Dunlin *Calidris alpina*. It looks diminutive compared with a male Ruff, and even small female Ruffs are noticeably bigger. Although similar in shape, it is more delicate, with a



76. Juvenile Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis*, Scilly, September 1970
(J. B. & S. Bottomley)

short, straight, fine bill, a small head, a long, slim body, and medium-longish legs. Apart from fine black spotting on the sides of the breast, it is uniformly pale buff from the face to the undertail-coverts, although it does become paler on the flanks and vent area. The eye stands out strongly on a bland, plain-looking face. A fine pale eye-ring may be visible at close range, while the finely streaked crown can sometimes give a slightly capped appearance. The upperparts are blackish-brown, with the feathers finely but noticeably fringed pale buff; on juveniles the edgings are broadest and most obvious on the wing-coverts. The legs are noticeably ochre-yellow, although mud-staining may occasionally dull the colour to brownish. The Ruff, as well as being larger and taller, is less delicately proportioned; it is slightly longer billed, longer necked, longer legged and bulkier bodied. On plumage, a Buff-breasted Sandpiper should not be confused with an adult Ruff: in summer, female Ruffs have noticeable black mottling on both the upperparts and underparts, while in winter both sexes are essentially pale grey, usually with strikingly orange legs. Only juvenile Ruffs may present a problem: they too are buff below, but the colour is usually deeper and more orange in tone, fading to whitish on the flanks and belly. The upperparts are prominently scaled with coarse buff edgings, while the legs are invariably dull grey-green or brownish. In flight, any confusion should be instantly eliminated. The Ruff is long winged, with an effortless, easy wing action; there is a prominent whitish wing bar and two prominent white oval patches on the sides of the rump, though some individuals virtually lack the dark central bar, giving a white crescent-shaped rump patch. The Buff-breasted Sandpiper always looks small in flight (only slightly larger than a Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*), and, when seen from below, its short bill

and shape may suggest a small plover. The upperwing in flight is plain, and, although there are narrow pale tips to the greater coverts, it lacks a pale wing bar. The pale-edged wing-coverts of juveniles contrast somewhat with the darker primaries. Unlike the Ruff, the rump appears plain, but the tail has a dark central bar with greyer sides. The underwing is noticeably white, but with dark leading underwing-coverts, a dark trailing edge on the primaries and secondaries and a noticeable dark crescent on the greater under primary coverts. Unlike the Ruff, the legs do not project beyond the tail.

Most individuals seen in Britain are juveniles but, unlike most waders, it may take very close views to make an age-diagnosis. Juveniles have a dark subterminal crescent and a complete, broad whitish fringe on each of the upperwing-coverts (plain with a dark centre on adults), and whitish fringes to the mantle and scapulars (buff on adults). In autumn, adult plumage is likely to be more worn than that of juveniles.

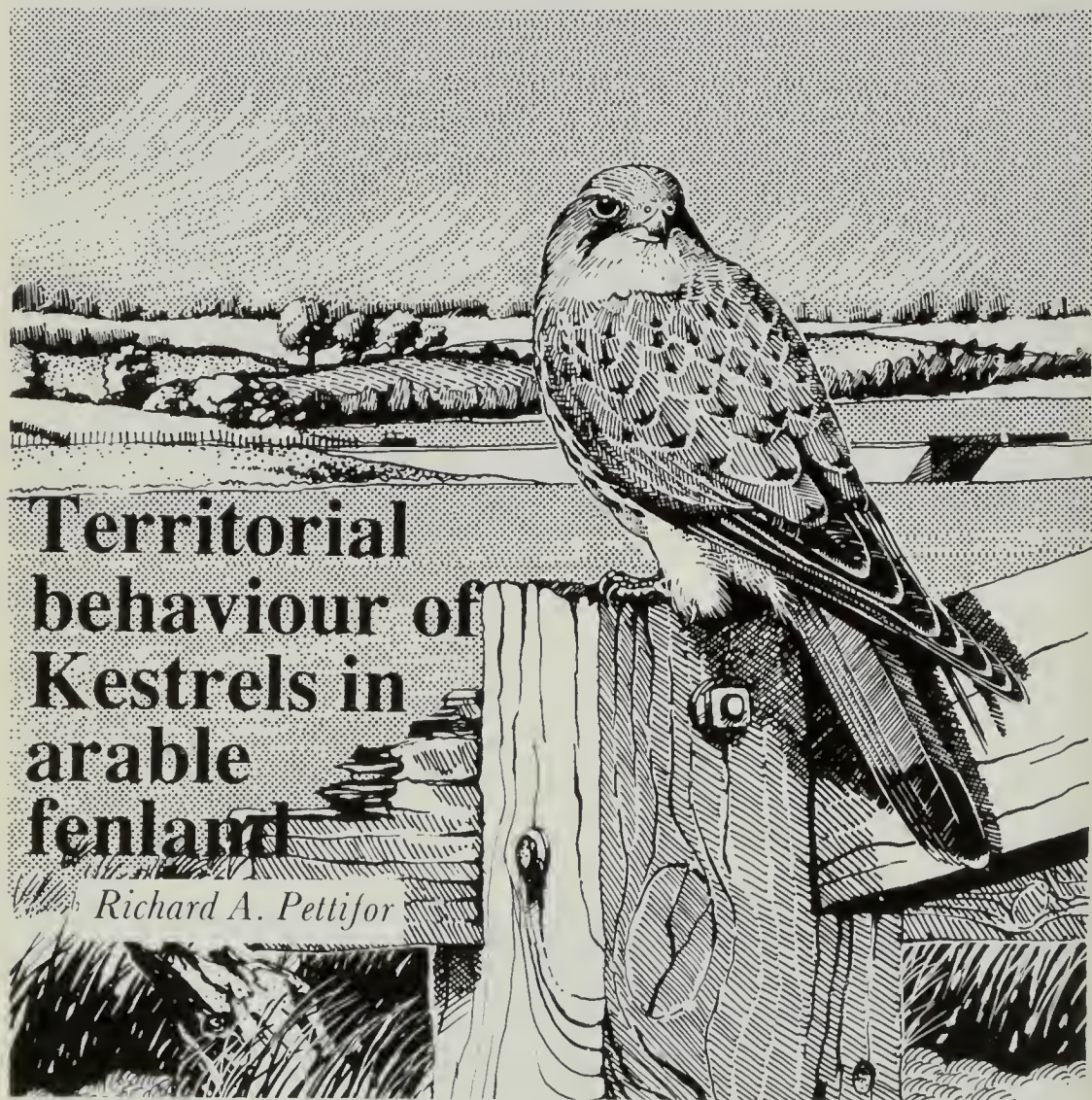
The Buff-breasted Sandpiper is usually associated with short grass habitats, such as airfields and golf courses, but does occur in freshwater habitats, such as reservoirs, where it frequently associates with other small waders; in such habitats, it tends to feed on slightly drier mud, away from the water's edge. When feeding, the stance is often horizontal, the legs are flexed and the head is slightly bobbed while walking. It is an active feeder, walking quickly but daintily, pecking every two or three steps. The actions are, however, rather erratic, with frequent changes of direction, perhaps recalling a phalarope *Phalaropus*. The Ruff, on the other hand, is rather more purposeful, with a smoother, more confident walk, and a slower, more deliberate picking action. The two feeding actions may at times appear more similar, so differences should be used with caution. When found on 77. Juvenile Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* (in comparison with Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis*, note proportionately longer bill, longer legs and longer neck, coarser scaling on upperparts, and less bland face; in real life, larger size, more orangey underparts, and dull greenish or brownish legs would also be apparent), Cornwall, September 1981 (*G. P. Sutton*)



their own, Buff-breasted Sandpipers are invariably tame, often allowing approaches to within a few metres. When stalked too closely, they may crouch low and 'freeze'; when pursued too far, they may run off in front of the observer with the neck extended. Like Ruffs, they seldom call on passage; the only call I have ever heard is an instantly forgettable low, rather gruff 'chu'.

KEITH VINICOMBE

49 Trelawny Road, Cotham, Bristol BS6 6DY



Birds of prey exhibit a wide range of dispersion patterns, determined in part by their response to varying prey availability (Newton 1979). The Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* has been recorded nesting colonially (Fennel 1954), or solitarily, with pairs defending a restricted area around their nest sites (Tinbergen 1940, Cavé 1968); occasionally pairs may defend an exclusive home range during the breeding season, possibly occupying the same range in winter (Shrubb 1970). This paper reports on the year-round territorial behaviour of a small sedentary population of unmarked Kestrels studied in eastern England.

Study area

Observations were made in a 40-km² study site on the southern edge of the

East Anglian fens, a flat, open and intensively cultivated area where cereal production predominated, followed by sugar beet and other root crops. Although eight habitat categories were recognised for analysis of foraging behaviour, only the grassy areas need concern us here. These included lode and river banks, ditches and drains, road verges and other grass. Lodes (raised canals carrying run-off water from the chalk hills in the east), together with the ditches and drains which delimit field boundaries, criss-crossed the study area. Other grass was a catch-all category, and included shelterbelts, small copses, meadows, and part of 100ha of Wicken Fen Nature Reserve in the northwestern corner of the study area.

Methods

The study was carried out between November 1977 and October 1981. On most days until October 1980, a distance of 6km through the middle of two territories was covered either on foot or by bicycle. Observations taking in some part of the remainder of the study area were made on most weekends (no observations were made during mid February to mid May 1980). Between November 1980 and October 1981, more intensive study was possible.

Plotting of territories

During the study period, all flight paths, display flights and conflicts between Kestrels were plotted on 1:25,000 Ordnance Survey maps on a 12-monthly basis. During periods of intensive observation of individuals, flight paths were also plotted on 1:10,000-scale maps, with particular attention paid to perch sites. Although none of the Kestrels was marked or wing-tagged, which imposes serious limitations on studies of territoriality, by the end of the 1978 breeding season the hunting ranges of each pair had been determined from:

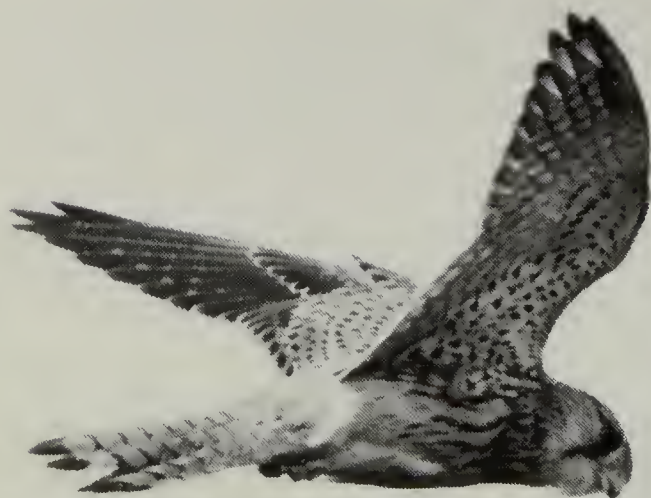
(i) Flight paths of different individuals of the same sex seen at a time interval which precluded the possibility of their being of the same individual. (ii) Intensive study of an individual, which, particularly when carried out over a number of days, allowed a pattern of perch usage to emerge; perch changes and other flight paths were used to determine the extent of the range. (This method was also useful in elucidating overlap in hunting areas between adjacent pairs, or when perches were close to territory boundaries.) (iii) The 'turning-back' points of extended flight paths. (iv) Flight paths to and from nesting areas. (v) Display flights and points of conflict between neighbours.

Observations in subsequent years reinforced the contention that this was a reliable method of territory delimitation when working with a small population of unmarked birds.

Determination of territory size

Territory size was determined by the maximum polygon method: the area enclosed by a line drawn around the outer flight paths of each pair.

To investigate annual changes in territory size, the maximum polygon area was worked out for each territory between November and the follow-



78. Female Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*, Netherlands, March 1975 (Hans Schouten)

ing October. In order to ensure that only those territories which showed no sample size bias were used, the increase in maximum area with the increase in number of flight paths was plotted against number of flight paths observed. It was found that, for those territories for which more than 20 flight paths had been recorded, increase in territory size tailed off at $n = 15$. Consequently, only territories with 15 or more flight paths were used. Village (1982), using spot observations of wing-tagged Kestrels, found that increase in range size tailed off at $n = 20$. Since any flight path is equivalent to at least two spot observations, the maximum area enclosing 15 or more flight paths probably gives an accurate picture of territory size.

Extent of grassy areas in territories

To determine the extent of grassy areas within each territory, individual territory size was determined as above for all flight paths recorded during the whole four-year study period. The lengths of ditches, drains, lodes and road verges within the maximum area of each territory over four years were determined from a 1:25,000 Ordnance Survey map. A check was carried out over 18 km to note any differences in the conditions during the study period compared with those at time of map publication. As these were less than 5%, no corrections were made. Widths of these habitats were measured in the field, and the means used to calculate the area of each habitat within the territory boundaries.

Results

Maintenance of territories

Territories were maintained throughout the year, and defended by both sexes. Territorial conflicts between two Kestrels were seen in all months

except December and January, most commonly in the form of mutual soaring along a common boundary (17 of 25 conflicts observed); individuals were seen to fly up to 1.5km to display along their boundary in response to a neighbour already displaying. Some conflicts also involved rapid chasing (seven out of 25), usually when one bird was initially perched. Physical contact was observed twice, the raptors locking talons and tumbling through the air, with much excited calling. Kestrels may continue to display after separating. More than one of the above responses may be seen during a single conflict.

Territorial display flights, in the apparent absence of a displaying neighbour, were observed in all months of the year. As with mutual soaring, these were generally at heights above 80m, with the Kestrel frequently displaying along part of its boundary. The soaring may be interspersed with shallow glides, and may end in a rapid, steep stoop to a prominent perch. In 62 of 124 observed display flights where the sex of the participant was identified, males were recorded in 61% of the cases and females in 39%. In actual conflicts, either or both sexes may be involved.

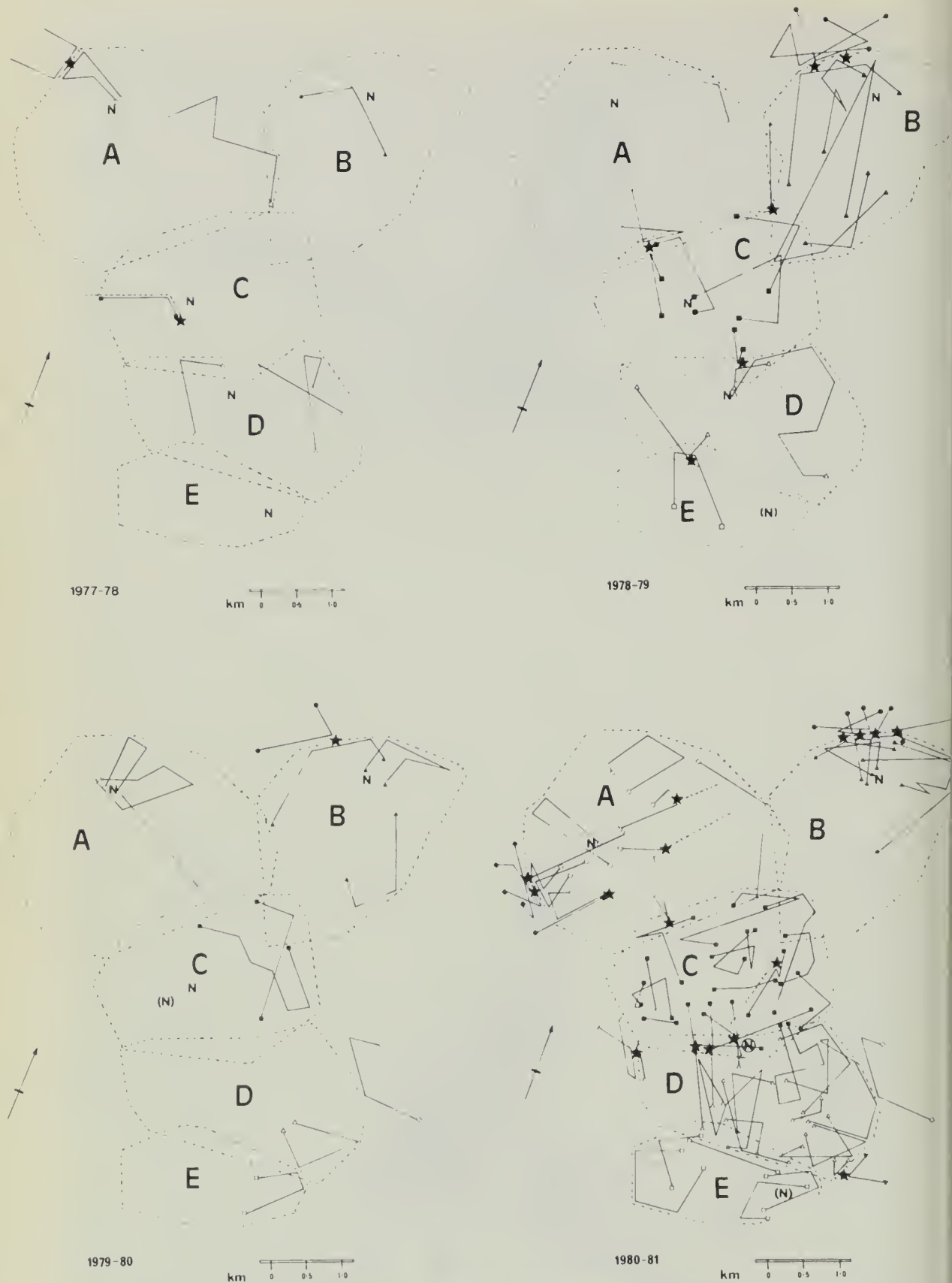
Stability of territories

Territorial display flights and conflicts for each year, from November to the next October, are illustrated in figs. 1-4 (note that maximum area boundaries over the four years are used). Three points emerge:

(i) Most conflicts occurred along territory boundaries. (ii) Conflicts at the same position were observed at intervals of more than one year, even when a newcomer had replaced the previous occupant which had disappeared

79. Male Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*, Lancashire, November 1976 (*Dennis Green*)





Figs. 1-4. Territorial display flights and conflicts of Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus* in East Anglia for each year November-October 1977/78, 1978/79, 1979/80 and 1980/81. Territory boundaries enclose the maximum area over the four-year period, except territory C (November 1977-October 1980). Solid lines = display flights of territory owners; broken lines = flights of birds of unknown origin; * = territorial conflict; N = known nest site; (N) = approx. position of used nest; (N) = nest site inspected by Kestrels but not used. Arrow indicates north

(e.g. conflicts between males defending territories A and C in 1978/79, and in the same position in 1980/81 involving a different male in territory C). (iii) Most display flights followed, at least in part, the territory boundaries. Thus, territory boundaries appeared relatively stable from year to year. To check this, the sizes of those territories for which more than 15 flight paths had been plotted for any one year were recorded (table 1). This shows considerable uniformity in individual territory size, even over four years. An exception is territory C in 1980/81, where habitat disturbance, and a shift in the nest site by 1 km, occurred. Generally, individual territory size did not appear to vary greatly from one year to another, even if one member of a pair was replaced by another (e.g. in territory C in 1978/79 and 1979/80, where the original female disappeared in late August 1979).

Table 1. Territory size (maximum polygon area) in hectares of individual territories of Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus* in East Anglia for each year November-October 1977/78-1980/81 where number of flight paths exceeded 15

Territory	YEAR			
	1977/78	1978/79	1979/80	1980/81
A	606			675
B		498	456	435
C	358	367	381	518
D		387		425

Seasonal variation in territory size

Seasonal variation in territory size has been noted previously for the Kestrel (Village 1982) and also for other raptors (Newton 1979). In the present study, only two territories permitted such analysis, and only in one year. Territories B and D both had more than 15 flight paths recorded in 1980/81 for winter (mid October to mid April) as well as for summer (mid April to mid October), and territory size was determined for each season (table 2). There does not appear to be any marked seasonal variation.

Table 2. Seasonal variation in size (in ha) of two territories of Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus* in East Anglia in 1980/81 where number of flight paths exceeded 15 in both winter (mid October-mid April) and summer (mid April-mid October)

	TERRITORY	
	B	D
Winter	406	375
Summer	419	381

Extent of grassy areas in territories

The study Kestrels spent 81% of their foraging time hunting over grassy areas (Pettifor in prep.), and the extents of these habitats enclosed by the maximum area of each territory over four years are compared (table 3). Although the area of any particular grassy habitat varied considerably between territories, the coefficient of variation in total grassy area between territories ($-\delta_x = 0.151$) is less than the variation in size between territories

Table 3. Maximum territory size (polygon area) over four-year period 1977/78-1980/81 for each territory of Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus* in East Anglia and extent of grassy habitats (in ha) within each territory

	TERRITORY				
	A	B	C	D	E
Territory size (ha)	750	556	463	425	288
GRASSY HABITAT (ha)					
Lode/river	35.5	18.3	6.9	5.5	6.0
Ditch/drain	41.7	33.9	38.6	20.9	12.9
Road verge	16.3	10.3	13.9	9.5	14.3
Other grass	1.0	22.5	4.0	36.0	48.8
TOTAL GRASS	94.5	84.9	63.4	71.9	82.0
%GRASSY HABITAT IN TERRITORY	12.6	15.3	13.7	16.9	28.5

($\frac{\delta}{\bar{x}} = 0.345$): i.e., the combined grassy areas are comparatively similar for all territories, but there is greater variation in territory size.

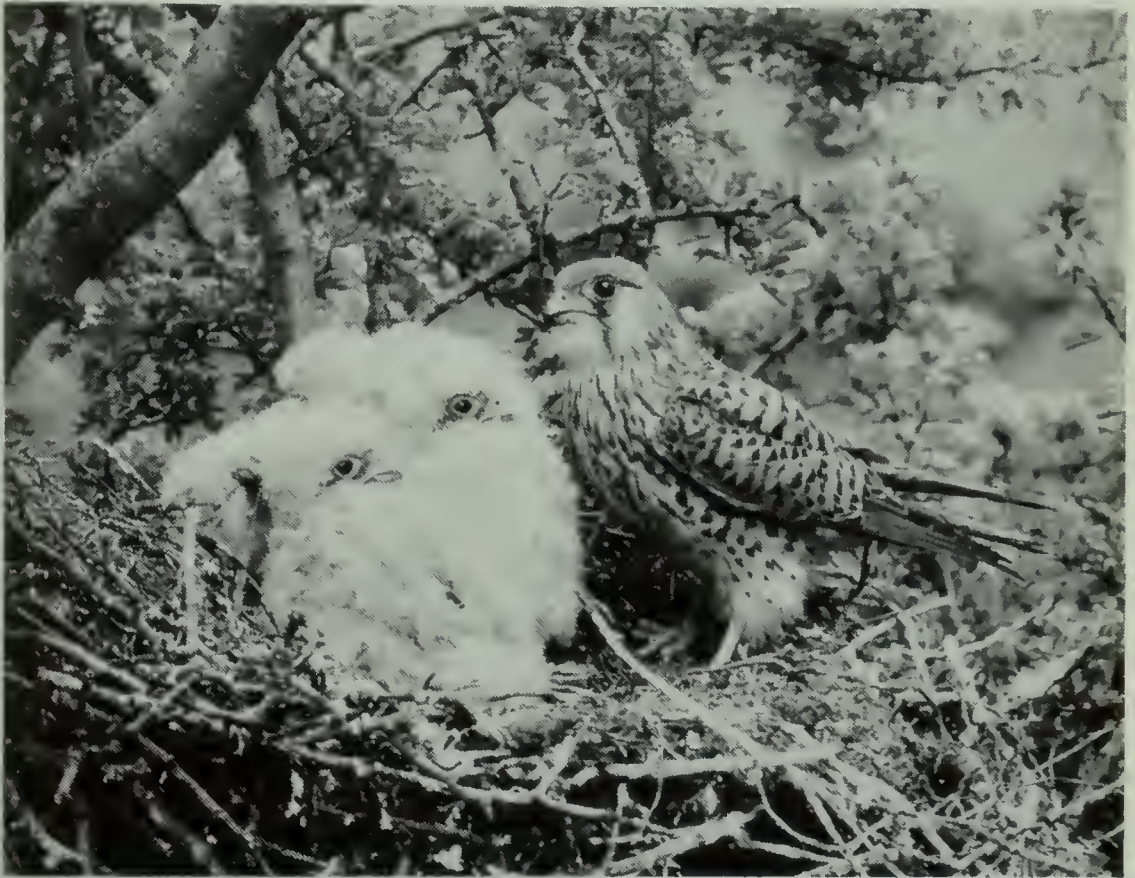
Discussion

The Kestrels studied by Tinbergen (1940), Cavé (1968) and Village (1982) defended only a restricted area around the nest site during the breeding season. Cavé (1968) considered his Dutch Kestrels to be non-territorial during winter, except when voles (*Microtinae*) were scarce; Village (1982), however, noted that the shared summer hunting ranges of his Scottish Kestrels disappeared in autumn and winter as individuals took up exclusive hunting ranges.

In East Anglia, Kestrels maintained and defended a territory throughout the year, with both members of a pair participating in its defence and the range being used for both hunting and nesting. Seasonal variation in territory size did not appear to be marked, either, although this conclusion is based on a small sample, while the seasonal divisions may be too broad to pick up monthly or bimonthly variations. This contention is, however, supported by the observations that both the area occupied by individual pairs, and the territory boundaries, were stable from year to year. In long-lived species, newcomers replacing a previous owner probably fit into an already stable system; mutual soaring along boundaries reinforces the existing framework, while display flights and conspicuous perching serve to advertise the continued occupancy of a territory.

The stability of (and lack of seasonal variation in) territory size over the study period, and the lesser variation in grassy habitat area than in total territory sizes, suggest that these territories represent viable hunting ranges for a pair of Kestrels all year round. Thus, disputes and display flights occurred throughout the year, and most disputes were along the boundaries of territories. Further, these territories were in excess of the size required for the defence of any other resources, such as nest sites. Secondary benefits may occur, however, such as the maintenance of the pair-bond throughout the year, thereby possibly facilitating earlier breeding (courtship-feeding was observed in January, and copulation in early February).

Davies (1978) has suggested that, when territories are linked to foraging, territorial behaviour is in part related to food availability; and Newton (1979) has argued the same for various raptor species. No index of prey density is available for the study areas, but agricultural operations probably maintain rodent populations at a relatively low level and dampen any oscillations in numbers. Consequently, the advantages of either a nomadic strategy as adopted by other open-country vole-hunters, such as skuas (*Stercorariidae*), some owls (*Strigiformes*) and kites *Elanus* and *Milvus* (Pitelka *et al.* 1955; Lockie 1955; W. R. Tarboton verbally; Newton 1979), or the shared hunting ranges of the Kestrel when voles are abundant (Cavé 1968), are not feasible options when vole densities are low over wide areas.



80. Female Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* with nestlings, Dyfed, June 1974 (Graham F. Date)

Since the Kestrels in my study spent much of their foraging time hunting from a perch, particularly in winter, it would be beneficial to them to be familiar with the better hunting sites, especially if their prey were sparse or patchy. Hence, an exclusive range for hunting would be to their advantage. Southern (1970) suggested a similar reason for the territorial behaviour of Tawny Owls *Strix aluco*. I noted that the Kestrels appeared to be intimately familiar with their territories, and confirmed this when I made observations on perch usage by an individual Kestrel (recognisable by plumage characteristics) along a 200-m lode bank for a four-month period: it used 13 of the 34 trees available to it, and spent over 50% of its hunting time perched on just two of these 13. Still-hunting is energetically less expensive than hovering, and any Kestrel able to obtain sufficient prey by this method is at an advantage over one procuring prey mainly by hovering.

I consider, therefore, that an exclusive feeding territory provides the most viable spacing system for Kestrel pairs in areas where the nature of the habitat results in locally patchy hunting areas. Further, where prey availability is influenced by the patchiness of a habitat, intimate knowledge of such sites and of hunting perches is beneficial to a Kestrel, since these sites are often constant over time. In order to obtain this familiarity with foraging sites, and to prevent interference or competition, an exclusive range is necessary.

Acknowledgments

Warwick Tarboton discussed this project with me in its earlier stages, while Dr N. B. Davies and Dr I. Newton made many helpful comments and suggested improvements on an earlier draft.

Summary

The territorial behaviour of a small sedentary population of Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus* (five pairs) was studied over a four-year period, from November 1977 to October 1981, in the intensively cultivated East Anglian fens. Pairs defended territories throughout the year. These territories were stable over the study period, even when replacements occurred. Seasonal variation in territory size was not thought to be marked. Territory size varied between 288 ha and 750 ha, while total grassy area (important hunting sites) in each territory did not differ so markedly (63-95 ha). The territorial behaviour was thought to be linked to the nature of the habitat influencing foraging opportunities.

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Cambridge CB5 0LQ

Personalities

30 R. A. Hume

Rob Hume, expert on gulls and terns, wildlife artist, formerly co-editor of the greatly acclaimed West Midland Bird Club annual report and more recently co-compiler of the *British Birds* feature 'Recent reports' (largely unchecked!), is well known to birders throughout the UK. What is less well known is Rob Hume, motivator of volunteers, writer and editor of RSPB group newsletters and lecturer. Rob is indeed a man of many parts: often difficult to get to know, shy, yet kind and helpful to all—young and old—who express any interest in wildlife.

I first met RAH—initials surely destined to become as well known as PJC in RSPB circles—when he applied for one job but was offered another, in my department. It was with some reluctance that Rob agreed to give the Development job—lecturing, introducing film shows, and so on—a go. Little to do with birds, I hear you say—yes, our work is certainly more to do with people than birds—a far cry from his roots in the West Midlands. So, to know the man, let's look back to those early days. Born in Staffordshire, he was taken to see a Night Heron at the age of eight, but can't remember it (what an honest man). Can he tick it?

After Cannock Grammar School, he spent one year at Stafford College of Art, and then went to University College Swansea, where he obtained a Geography degree. The rest of his education has been rather less formal, but seven years of contact with RSPB staff and members can be worth a lifetime at university! In the Midlands, he claims birdwatching experience

81. Rob Hume (*M. Simpkin*)



from the age of 14 and up to the late 1970s logged over 2,000 visits to Chasewater, Staffordshire. He was rewarded with a host of 'goodies', including Least Sandpiper, Red-footed Falcon and an inland Cory's Shearwater. The strange attraction RAH has for gulls developed there, but it was when he transferred his attention to Blackpill that this interest turned to an obsession. Whilst at Swansea, he claimed almost daily visits, and, largely as a result, Blackpill became nationally known for an excellent selection of gulls, including Mediterranean, Glaucous and Iceland. In 1973, Rob found the first British Ring-billed, and until his departure from Swansea he just kept finding them!

He later had a temporary job as a clerical assistant at a DHSS office, but soon found that clerical work was not to his liking (anyone who doubts this should try to find him underneath the paper on his desk).

The RSPB and RAH came together in 1976, when he joined the Wales Office to assist in Upland Surveys. This was a wonderful chance to get to know Merlins, Golden Plovers, Hen Harriers and Buzzards, and the wild beauty of those remote hills: excellent experience for a budding wildlife artist, and it also undoubtedly strengthened his resolve to work full-time for wildlife conservation.

Since his appointment at The Lodge, Rob has taken full advantage of the opportunities to travel, recent overseas trips including The Gambia, Yugoslavia, Mallorca, Spain and Israel. He has joined me on three recent visits to Holland, and in 1982 was guest lecturer on an 'Around Britain' cruise. Overseas visits, Rob claims, make him more greatly appreciate the common birds at home: he has a strong dislike for birders who come back from abroad with long lists, but little appreciation of what they have been looking at. Increasingly, Rob's important role in the powerful RSPB promotional machine has meant less time spent watching and drawing birds. A moral here: don't join the staff of a conservation organisation if you want actually to *see* wildlife.

Often in contact with famous wildlife artists—he admires Warren, Cusa, Hayman, Gillmor, Busby and Wallace—Rob's life is increasingly dominated by media involvement of various kinds: art shows, feature writing, newsletter editing, introductions and lecturing. Fine-line work and more recently paintings flow from his own brush and pen: his output is prolific.

Even though he finds it a struggle to maintain fieldwork, I suspect that, if pressed, Rob would express a quiet satisfaction with the changes that the RSPB has brought to his life. He remains a very private and often difficult-to-get-to-know person. He lists amongst his hobbies: books, reading, watching sport on TV (but not the RSPB cricket team!), gulls and birds!

Should any *BB* readers wish to meet RAH, then locate a rare gull or tern and you will find him there (assuming that RSPB duties or a late request for 150 drawings from an impatient publisher allows). Visit your local bird club or RSPB group to see him in action, view him on stage at the Royal Festival Hall, join him on a birding visit to Holland and drink a few glasses of malt whisky with him: only then will you perhaps start to find out what makes Rob Hume tick.

TREVOR GUNTON



Yellow-browed Bunting: new to Britain and Ireland

A. R. Kitson and I. S. Robertson

For the small band of observers remaining on Fair Isle, Shetland—the observatory warden, two assistants and two visitors—12th October 1980 was already a hectic day, fresh arrivals including a Short-toed Lark *Calandrella cinerea*, three eastern Stonechats *Saxicola torquata maura/stejnegeri*, two Red-breasted Flycatchers *Ficedula parva*, a Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica* and a suspected Little Bunting *E. pusilla*. It was, however, to become a sensational day, dare we say a 'red Setter day'.

Discovery and identification

At about 15.30 GMT, ARK was walking along the edge of the turnip crop at Setter, vaguely in search of a Little Bunting which had been reported heading in that direction some two hours earlier. A small bird hopping around under the turnip leaves caught his eye. Fragmentary views suggested a bunting *Emberiza* and he suspected that it might be a Little, but when its head came into full view he was startled to see a blaze of yellow over and in front of its eye and a white central crown-stripe between black lateral crown-stripes. As he gently walked the bird along the rows of turnips, three possible identities presented themselves: Yellow-browed Bunting *E. chrysophrys*, Little Bunting and White-throated Sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis*. The last was quickly eliminated, for, although this bird had a yellow head mark, it clearly could not be an adult White-throated Sparrow, since its underparts were streaked, and immatures lack the yellow; besides, it 'felt' like a bunting. From research prior to his Mongolian trips, ARK knew that Yellow-browed Bunting has a pale crown-stripe and a yellow supercilium, which fitted this bird very well; but could it not perhaps be an unusually well-marked Little Bunting? In spring, at least, Little can show quite vivid orange on the fore-supercilium, have blackish lateral crown stripes and be flecked underneath similar to this bird. During the advance, it was briefly flushed and heard to call: a high metallic 'tic' just like Little. Of course, most features were at variance with normal Little: no eye-ring, brown ear-coverts heavily bordered black, white crown-stripe, and most of all the yellow fore-supercilium; also, the bill: surely it was too large and was pink at the base?

ARK watched it for about 15 minutes, then ran to the phone in the Setter cottage, only to find no answer from the observatory. He watched the bird for some further minutes, leaning more and more towards Yellow-browed, then took leave for a few minutes to look up a probable Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* which had flown over as he was watching the bunting. It



82. Male Yellow-browed Bunting *Emberiza chrysophrys*, Shetland, October 1980
(I. S. Robertson)

was now that he met P. J. Ewins and K. M. Morton, both elated over the putative Citrine, but due to become even more so over the bunting.

It was easily found again in the turnips. The possibility of an aberrant Little Bunting was not upheld by PJE, and the probability was that this bunting with black-and-white crown and dash of lemon on the face was a Yellow-browed, a first for Britain and Ireland. PJE went to the phone to try to reach ISR at the observatory, only to learn that he was out. The message which did eventually reach him referred to a 'Yellow-browed WARBLER' *Phylloscopus inornatus*, so that he was still to remain blissfully unaware of the excitement at Setter. Since the light was beginning to fade and the bird was approachable, PJE decided that they (now joined by A. del-Nevo) should

catch the bird, which they did easily in a 20-foot single-shelf net. Back at the observatory, it was examined in the hand by ISR, and the measurements and plumage were found to be in good agreement with those for Yellow-browed Bunting in Dementiev & Gladkov (1969). We thus became certain of its identity. It was dark by the time the examination was over, so the bird was roosted overnight and released back at Setter the next morning, where it was to remain throughout most of its stay, moving to a similar crop at Field for the last few days, when disturbed by crop-lifting at Setter. It was last seen on 23rd October, by which time it had been seen by about 20 observers.

Field description

The Yellow-browed Bunting was quite confiding, allowing approach as close as 2 m at times. On 12th and 13th October, it was seen in good light and (remarkably for the Northern Isles) gentle breeze, through 9× and 10× binoculars, when the following description was taken.

SIZE AND SHAPE Small- to medium-sized bunting, nearer in size to Rustic than Little. No crest. Bill rather large, accentuated by pale pink base.

PLUMAGE Head pattern most striking: crown black, with narrow white crown-stripe widening on hind crown; supercilium broad, bright lemon yellow in front of and over eye, becoming whiter farther back; ear-coverts brown (quite warm in bright light, but not chestnut or rufous as on Little Bunting), with broad blackish outline extending backwards from eye, around rear edge and forward along lower edge in point towards gape with-

out quite reaching it, considerably more extensive than border of ear-coverts on Little Bunting; whitish spot in upper rear corner of ear-coverts, more conspicuous than on any other west Palearctic bunting; lore pale brownish, partly invaded by yellow of supercilium; no eye-ring; submoustachial stripe off-white, diffusing around ear-coverts patch; malar stripe fine and inconspicuous, of blackish flecks. Underparts sullied white with brownish invasion across sides of breast and flanks, overlaid with fine blackish flecks from chin to belly, smallest on chin and throat, boldest on flanks. Upperparts rich

83. Male Yellow-browed Bunting *Emberiza chrysophrys*, Shetland, October 1980
(I. S. Robertson)



brown, having chestnut tinge in centre of mantle, with black streaks probably extending onto rump, and a pair of inconspicuous buff 'braces'. Wings: lesser coverts brown; median and greater coverts with dark centres, buff edges and whitish tips, latter forming two narrow wing-bars; tertials edged buff; primaries and secondaries edged brown. Tail with white on outer feathers.

BARE PARTS Bill with flesh-pink base and grey tip. Legs flesh-pink.

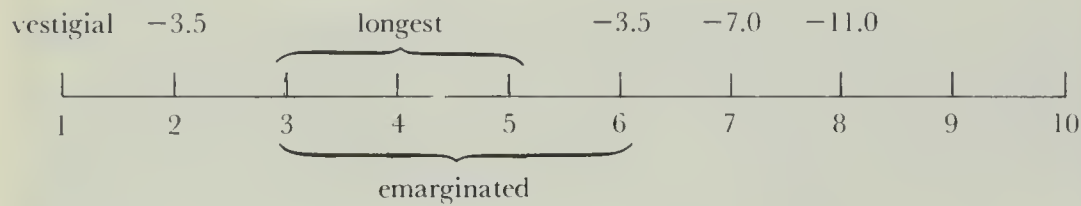
CALL 'Tic' or 'tic tic', probably indistinguishable from Little, Rustic and Yellow-breasted *E. aureola* Buntings. Three observers (KMM, Ad-N, ISR) thought a 'tink' note was given at times, possibly different from the 'tic'.

Hand description

HEAD Buff crown-stripe from base of upper mandible becoming white on top of crown, broadening out onto nape; lateral crown stripes very dark brown (almost black) with lighter tips; supercilium lemon yellow in front of eye, paler yellow behind, reaching to rear of ear-coverts, some feathers with black spots at tips especially above eye; eye-ring pale yellow, incomplete (above and below eye only); lore greyish-brown; ear-coverts dull brown with white spot in upper rear corner; eye-stripe sepia from behind eye only, forming dark border to ear-coverts.

UPPERPARTS Warm brown with blackish central streaks to feathers very similar to those of

WING FORMULA



Sex and age

The bright head pattern of this individual, in particular the yellow supercilium, prompted us to speculate that it was a male. After comparison with skins at the British Museum (Natural History), Tring, Derek Goodwin confirmed this.

It has, however, not been possible to age this bird. Derek Goodwin said: 'Our rather small series here (Yellow-browed Buntings at Tring), which consists mostly of late autumn, winter and spring birds, does not suggest to me that there is any difference between the colours of adult and first-year birds once the moult is over, though it is possible that a more comprehensive series would show that some slight differences that appear to be merely individual were linked with age.'

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*; longest uppertail-coverts without dark streaks.

UNDERPARTS Chin and throat off-white with fine dark streaks; submoustachial stripe off-white bordered by blackish malar stripe; breast washed buff, strongest at sides, overlaid with fine black streaks; flanks buffish with long, extensive black streaks; belly and undertail-coverts unstreaked off-white.

WINGS Lesser coverts dull olive-buff; median coverts sepia with buff tips forming wing-bar; greater coverts sepia with buff tips and buff edge to outer web forming wing-bar; alula and greater primary coverts dull olive-brown; primaries and secondaries dull olive-brown with fine pale buff edges; tertials sepia with broad warm buff outer webs and tips.

TAIL Central feathers dull olive-brown, rest blackish with outer feathers showing white wedge from tip to 40 mm along shaft; penultimate feathers similar with wedge extending 25 mm; third outermost feathers with tiny white spot at tips.

BARE PARTS Upper mandible with straight culmen dark horn, pinkish at base and along cutting edge; lower mandible pale pink with slight dark horn at tip; legs and feet pale flesh-pink; eyes very dark brown.

MEASUREMENTS Wing 78 mm; bill 12.5 mm (depth at nares 6.2 mm); tarsus 20.5 mm; tail 63 mm; wing-point to longest secondaries 11 mm; wing-point to tip of tail 38 mm; total length 150 mm; weight 19.9 g.



84. Male Yellow-browed Bunting *Emberiza chrysophrys*, Shetland, October 1980
(I. S. Robertson)

Behaviour

The Yellow-browed Bunting spent most of its stay on the ground among turnip crops, where it fed continuously on seeds, particularly of chickweed *Stellaria media*. It was usually quite approachable, even to 2 m at times, although then it would become agitated, looking around nervously and raising its crown feathers. At other times, it could easily be overlooked, camouflaged against a dark brown soil or hidden among the turnip drills. It was reluctant to fly: when it did, it rarely went more than 50 m before dropping back into the crop. Occasionally, it perched on fences for brief periods. At Field, it fed in a more open situation, when photographs were taken at close range (plates 83-86).

Origin

There is very little known about Yellow-browed Buntings. Dementiev & Gladkov (1969) gave its numerical status as 'Rare, sporadically distributed.' The range map (fig. 1) is very tentative, only one nest has been described, and almost nothing is known of the ecology of the species. It inhabits shrub-thickets and taiga forest, and, if the range map has any reliability, it is the most easterly distributed passerine to have occurred in Britain. The westernmost boundary of its range is at about 105°E (Vaurie 1959), considerably farther east than the westernmost Pallas's Warblers *Phylloscopus proregulus*, Dusky Warblers *P. fuscatus* or Pallas's Reed Buntings *Emberiza pallasii*, which all occur west to about 85°E.

The wintering area of Yellow-browed Buntings is in eastern China,



Fig. 1. Distributions of Yellow-browed Bunting *Emberiza chrysophrys* in breeding season (northerly black area) and in winter (southerly black area) (after Dementiev & Gladkov 1954 and Cheng 1976)

where they appear (at Chihli on the lower Yangtse) from September with the main arrivals in October and continuing to 20th November. The autumn migration within the USSR is not known, but is thought to commence in the first half of September.

The weather conditions leading up to the arrival on 12th October 1980 were classic for the arrival of eastern vagrants on Fair Isle. A northeast airstream predominated on 11th October as a low off the Norwegian coast filled, while two lows to the south were giving an easterly or southeasterly flow of air over the Baltic and southern North Sea. To the east, a large high extended from the Kola Peninsula (fig. 2). A tentative route for Siberian vagrants following a 'reverse migration' pattern would be along the easterly flow of the Siberian high to be funnelled across northern Norway and

85. Male Yellow-browed Bunting *Emberiza chrysophrys*, Shetland, October 1980
(I. S. Robertson)



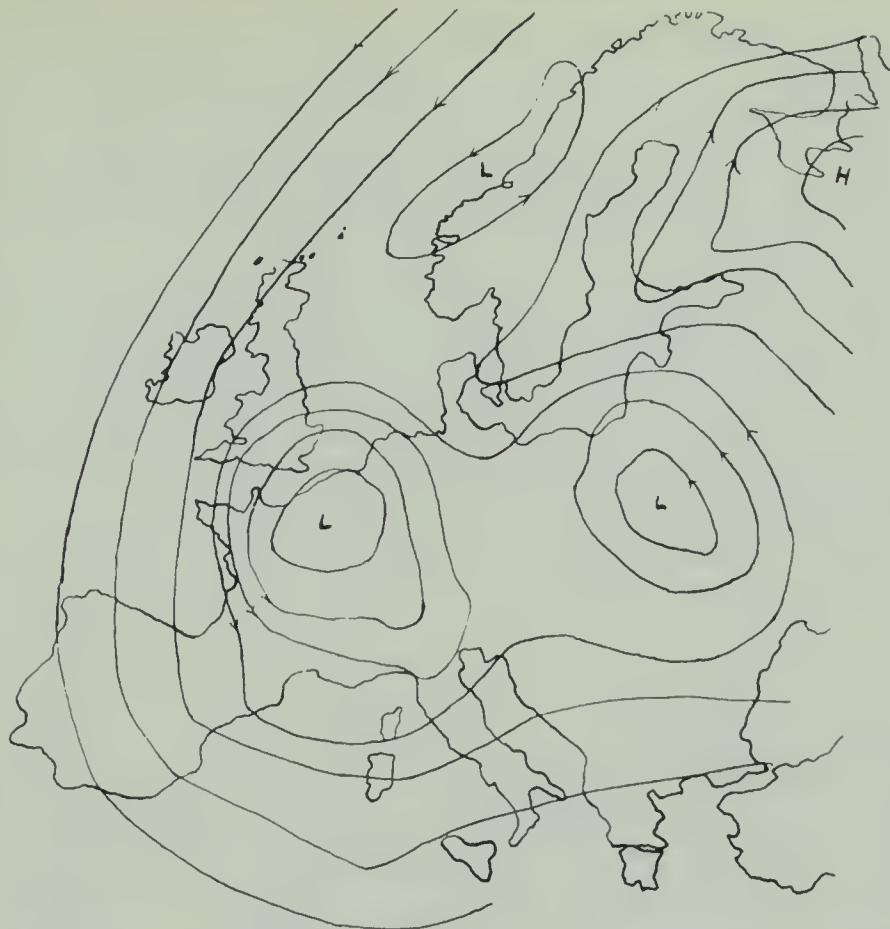


Fig. 2. Weather chart for 06.00 GMT on 11th October 1980 (courtesy the Meteorological Office)

thence down the Norwegian coast on northeast winds, right to Fair Isle! When this weather situation is looked at in terms of a globe, rather than a flat map, it at once becomes apparent that a reverse route (great circle)

86. Male Yellow-browed Bunting *Emberiza chrysophrys*, Shetland, October 1980
(I. S. Robertson)



from eastern Siberia would coincide with the prevailing weather very neatly.

The first hint of eastern promise occurred on 10th October when a Yellow-browed Warbler (unusually scarce that autumn) appeared. On 11th October, two Yellow-browed Warblers were found, along with Rustic Bunting, Scarlet Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* and a Short-toed Lark of a greyish eastern type.

The morning of 12th October was bright and sunny with good visibility and a light northeasterly airstream. By lunchtime, the handful of observers had found four eastern species (see introductory paragraphs). A further two eastern Stonechats were found after lunch, a suspected Little Bunting was heard, and a wagtail was seen which was rather problematical, showing some characters of Citrine Wagtail, but also some of one of the far-eastern forms of Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava simillima/taivana*. In addition to these vagrants, there were numbers of common migrants as well, most notably Chiffchaffs *P. collybita*, which reached a record number for Fair Isle, 80; nearly all of them were of the greyish northern type, possibly some *P. c. abietinus* from the eastern part of its range, but also more likely some *P. c. tristis*, the 'Siberian' Chiffchaff.

Migrants were clearly arriving throughout the day, coming ashore on the northeast coast, particularly in the vicinity of the Gully, thence being funnelled up to the Plantation. There were first seen two of the Stonechats, the wagtails coming from this direction and a bunting in early afternoon, believed on call to be Little, but on hindsight quite likely to have been the Yellow-browed Bunting newly arrived. This wave of eastern birds continued on 14th October, with a Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos*, a Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae* and a fresh Rustic Bunting.

This was the first acceptable record of Yellow-browed Bunting in Britain and Ireland. The species has been imported in very small numbers, along with other buntings, from Hong Kong (T. P. Inskipp, verbally), but with such a distinguished list of 'fellow travellers' arriving on a classic weather system there can be little doubt that the Fair Isle bird was a genuine vagrant. A record of one at Holkham, Norfolk, on 19th October 1975 was rejected by the BOU Records Committee (*Ibis* 122: 568) with this comment: 'The Committee felt unable to accept the identification because of discrepancies between the three independent descriptions submitted; they note, however, that the bird was seen during a remarkable influx of Siberian passerines.' There are two old Continental records: one from Lille in northern France in about 1830, which is accepted (Mayaud 1953), and another from the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg in spring 1863, which is regarded as doubtful (Hennicke 1900, Molineux 1930); the latter is presumably the one noted as 'Belgium' by Vaurie (1959) and other authors.

Acknowledgments

We thank Derek Goodwin and the British Museum (Natural History), Tring, for examining skins; the Meteorological Office, Bracknell, for copies of their weather charts; and Robert Hudson for tracing the old European records.

Summary

A male Yellow-browed Bunting *Emberiza chrysophrys* was watched on Fair Isle, Shetland, on

12th October 1980; it was netted, ringed, roosted overnight and then released on the morning of 13th; it was last seen on 23rd October. This is the first fully accepted record for Britain and Ireland, and the second or third for Europe.

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 I. S. Robertson, Myrtle Cottage, Brough, Whalsay, Shetland



A total of 151 transparencies was submitted by 57 photographers for this 1983 competition. The general standard of entries was exceedingly high, with all of the short-listed transparencies being top quality photographs.

After short-listing 18 entries, a final ten were selected, and then placed in order after a vote:

- 1st BIRD PHOTOGRAPH OF THE YEAR Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* by David M. Cottridge (plate 87)
- 2nd Black Storks *Ciconia nigra* by Dr K. J. Carlson (plate 88)
- 3rd Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* by A. T. Moffett (plate 89)
- 4th Stock Doves *Columba oenas* by J. Russell (plate 90)
- 5th Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* by Roger Tidman
- 6th Crested Lark *Galerida cristata* by Dr Mike Hill
- 7th Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* by Oene Moedt
- 8th Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major* by A. T. Moffett
- 9th Coot *Fulica atra*, Gadwall *Anas strepera* and Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* by Chris Knights
- 10th Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix* by Gordon Riddle

Also short-listed: White-fronted Geese *Anser albifrons* (Gordon Langsbury), Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus* (M. C. Wilkes), Curlew *Numenius arquata* (Mr & Mrs R. W. Gibling), Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus* (Chris Knights), Redwing *Turdus iliacus* (P. Smith), Mistle Thrush *T. viscivorus* (Gordon Langsbury), Rook *Corvus frugilegus* (S. C. Brown), Siskin *Carduelis spinus* (Keith Atkin).



87. BIRD PHOTOGRAPH OF THE YEAR Female Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*, Shetland, May 1982 (David M. Cottridge). Nikon F3 with 55 mm Micro-Nikkor, f8 at 1/125th second, Agfachrome 100

88. 2ND. Black Storks *Ciconia nigra*, Portugal, June 1982 (K. J. Carlson). Nikon, 400 mm Novoflex lens, f5.6 at 1/125th second, Kodachrome 64





3RD. Male Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*, West Midlands, May 1982 (A. T. Moffett). Olympus OM1, 300mm Zuiko lens, Kodachrome 64



90. 4TH. Stock Doves *Columba oenas*, Derbyshire, June 1982 (J. Russell). Nikon FE, Vivitar 100-200mm zoom lens, 2 flash units, f8 at 1/15th second, Kodachrome 64

David M. Cottridge's winning entry (plate 87) has everything: a superbly sharp photograph of a photogenic bird, and also with the sense of impending action, as the phalarope stalks the fly. David Cottridge described how he obtained this photograph: 'At one point, I watched a bird stalking and catching flies which had landed on some stones at the edge of the loch. I quietly lay down at the water's edge as it approached, fly-catching. It came within one foot of the camera and I was able to photograph the bird with its neck and bill stretched out just before it caught a fly.'

Dr Kevin Carlson's photograph of Black Storks (plate 88) is not only an excellent portrait of this scarce species, but also illustrates a fascinating piece of behaviour. Dr Carlson wrote: 'Whilst photographing the Black Storks nesting in Portugal over several days, we noticed both adults bringing water in their bills, to quench the youngsters' thirsts and cool them by dribbling it over them. On one occasion, in the extreme heat of the day, one of the adults arrived on the nest with a clump of aquatic vegetation dripping with water, and proceeded to drip the water onto the young, which in turn nibbled at the "sponge", squeezing water into their bills and down their heads and necks. When the "sponge" was dry, the adult dropped the pieces of vegetation into the nest and left. The young spent the next half hour preening each other, to collect the last of the moisture out of their down.'

A. T. Moffett tried but failed to photograph adult Cuckoos in 1981. In 1982, however, his several successes included this portrait of the singing male (plate 89). The opening oak buds suggest the recent arrival of this bird in early spring; note also the pouched throat and crested forehead feathers, but the barely parted bill. For the second year running, A. T. Moffett had

two transparencies short-listed; his second this year was a sunning Great Spotted Woodpecker, on the same branch as the Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis* which gained him fourth position in last year's competition.

J. Russell was actually photographing Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus* at their nest when the pair of Stock Doves (plate 90) started prospecting the Kestrels' nest-hole. The photograph of the male and female doves together captures not only the birds themselves but also the background foliage: a nice balance between flash on the birds and natural light on the background. This photograph, and all the others short-listed, demonstrate the very high standard of present-day bird-photography, which seems to improve every year.

It is perhaps instructive to note that 13 of the 18 short-listed transparencies were obtained using Kodachrome film, although this was used for only 38% of the original entries:

	Short-listed (18)	Total entries (151)
Kodachrome	72%	38%
Ektachrome	11%	50%
Agfachrome	11%	7%
Barfen	6%	3%
Fujichrome	0%	2%

RICHARD CHANDLER, ERIC HOSKING, J. T. R. SHARROCK and
DON SMITH

Mystery photographs

77 The upright posture, robust proportions and prominent, hooked bill of last month's mystery passerine (plate 73, repeated here) clearly indicate a shrike *Lanius*. As the body feathers and wing-coverts lack





91. Mystery photograph 78. Identify the species. Answer next month.

pronounced scaling and subterminal contour lines, the bird is in adult or near-adult plumage (the vestigial and uneven malar and breast markings, with uneven-textured underpart feathers, and the protruding down feathers to the rear of the coverts all suggest moult). Those shrikes which at this age exhibit strongly particoloured or pied upperparts and tail are therefore immediately excluded: the relatively plain and uniform upperparts and the paler tail are consistent only with a female Red-backed Shrike *L. collurio* or one of the so-called 'red-tailed' shrikes, Isabelline *L. isabellinus* and Brown *L. cristatus*, the latter an east Palearctic species but a long-distance migrant frequently cited as a candidate for westward vagrancy.

Could the bird be a female Red-backed, therefore? The crown and mantle appear concolorous but contrast with the brighter tail (the rump unfortunately cannot be seen). This balance of tones could conceivably occur in a female Red-backed (which sometimes exhibits an atypically rufous uppertail), but normally there is less contrast between tail and mantle in that species, while the flanks at least show well-defined crescentic barring. The strikingly pale base to the bill and the bold face-pattern (with clearly demarcated mask and pronounced, clean supercilium) also seem wrong for female Red-backed.

Equally, the upperparts are patently too dark for the three paler races of Isabelline Shrike; even the rather darker *L. i. phoenicuroides* would not usually appear as saturated as this and, additionally, would be expected to show at least a trace of a white primary patch and more obviously whitish, less intensely suffused underparts. Structurally, there are further clues. The tail, though partly obscured, is clearly relatively long and narrow. In conjunction with the large head and the deeply-based bill, this produces an elongated and rather top-heavy appearance. This combination of plumage and structural characters is compatible only with a Brown Shrike.

In life, features not evident in the photograph would provide confirmation of this diagnosis. The upperparts of nominate Brown Shrikes are

distinctly russet, much richer than the grey-brown or sandy upperparts of the Isabelline Shrike. (Of the three more easterly races, *L. c. superciliosus* also has rich, distinctly ruddy, upperparts, but *L. c. lucionensis* and, especially, *L. c. confusus* are rather paler and greyer.) The lower rump is similar to or rather brighter than the rest of the upperparts, but contrasts with the typically ochraceous tail; on the Isabelline Shrike, however, tail, uppertail-coverts and lower rump are all rufous (brightest on adult male *phoenicuroides* and *speculigerus*, but evident on all individuals) and contrast with the rest of the upperparts. The breast and belly normally exhibit a prominent russet or ochre flush. A good view of the tail would reveal that the outermost feathers were some two centimetres shorter than the longest feathers, with a correspondingly more graduated (as well as narrower) tail-shape than that of Isabelline (though beware the effects of tail moult in the latter species). This Brown Shrike was photographed by Jon Hornbuckle in Calcutta during March 1982.

A. R. DEAN

Notes

Cattle Egrets feeding on leeches On 12th April 1979, in Andalucia, southern Spain, I observed a number of herons and egrets searching for food in the flooded fields and swamps beside a small river in the Marismas. A large herd of cattle had waded far into the water, and ten cows finally gathered on a small, dry island. As they stood about ruminating, several Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis* walked among them, looking at their feet, legs and abdomens, where I could detect up to five leeches, each several centimetres long. The egrets carefully approached until one suddenly darted forward and picked off a leech, which it worked over on the ground for a short time before swallowing. Eventually, three of the 12 egrets fed in this way. The younger cows resisted this procedure, but the older ones showed no reaction to the egrets' approach. I could not determine which species of leech was involved.

G. A. J. SCHMIDT
Petersburger Weg 27, 23 Kiel 1, Germany

Although this feeding technique is well known, the differing reactions of young and old cows are interesting. EDS

Leg coloration of White Stork In 1979/80, during a five-month birding trip throughout South Africa and Namibia, I encountered large numbers of wintering White Storks *Ciconia ciconia* in flocks of from a few individuals to about 3,500. Of those that I observed closely, 80% had pale, grey/white legs with a varying amount of red on the upper thigh; the extremes were (i) totally pale grey/white legs, and (ii) red knees and red upper thighs. There were always some storks with normal red legs, and the pale-legged ones included both adults and immatures. Bill colour was always normal. As White Storks are not generally associated with water in South Africa, the



pale-legged ones might have had excreta-covered legs, a condition obvious in the case of the Marabou Stork *Leptoptilos crumeniferus*; this was, however, not witnessed during observations of the pale-legged White Storks.

E. J. MACKRILL

51 Shangri-La, Mahon, Minorca, Spain

The habit of all storks of retaining excreta on their legs as a means of thermoregulation is mentioned in *BWP* 1: 321. Eds

Probable bigamy by Pochard From 29th April 1979, at Corsham Lake, Wiltshire, there were one male and two female Pochards *Aythya ferina*. For the next two months, no other Pochards were present, although up to seven Tufted Ducks *A. fuligula* were seen. On 18th May, the male Pochard drove away a male Tufted Duck from its territory, completely ignoring a female Tufted. The male Pochard had left the lake by 31st May. The first female Pochard had four newly hatched ducklings on 18th June, but only three on 19th, these being reared to the free-flying stage. The second female had four ducklings four to five days old on 27th June, these being reduced to three by 1st July and to two by 3rd July; both were reared. On the evidence, the male Pochard was probably bigamous, although, according to *BWP* 1: 565, bigamy has not been definitely confirmed for this species.

JULIAN C. ROLLS

Homeleigh, 110 Beanacre, Melksham, Wiltshire SN12 7PZ

The majority view of the Notes Panel was that bigamy was much more likely than hybridisation. Eds

Whimbrels standing on overhead wires Several waders will perch on overhead wires and cables, but D. J. Fisher and I were surprised at the regularity with which we saw Whimbrels *Numenius phaeopus* standing on them (and also on the tops of big baobabs *Adansonia digitata*) above areas of coastal mangrove in The Gambia, West Africa, during December 1979. Up to four were perched together on several occasions.

R. A. HUME

41 Sandy Road, Potton, Bedfordshire

House Martin's nest on ship On 16th August 1979, on the ferry between Copenhagen, Denmark, and Malmö, Sweden, I found a pair of House Martins *Delichon urbica* nesting on board. They had built on a ledge across some electrical conduits and beneath a bulkhead close to the port rail. The first martin flew out to join the ship and alight on the nest about 4 km out of Malmö; it was subsequently joined by its mate. Both remained on or about the nest as long as the ship was alongside in Malmö. I was unable to ascertain whether the nest had eggs or young, nor to observe the martins' behaviour on the return journey. The nest was not of the usual dome structure, but flat and open, resembling that of a Swallow *Hirundo rustica* (see plate 92). The ship made the 25-km crossing about eight times each day, and the total passage took about one hour and 40 minutes.

R. A. F. COX

23 West Hill Road, Foxton, Cambridgeshire CB2 6SZ



92. Nest of pair of House Martins *Delichon urbica* on Copenhagen-Malmö ferry, August 1979
(R. A. F. Cox)

An anonymous item in *BTO News* (119:6) noted that 'House Martins nesting on boats will tolerate regular trips into the English Channel', but gave no further details. Eds

Unusual display by Meadow Pipits On 18th May 1980, at St Bee's Head, Cumbria, we observed an unusual display by a pair of Meadow Pipits *Anthus pratensis*. Both had flown ahead of us and landed on a narrow footpath about 15m away. They then faced each other and, with wings drooping and tails cocked, proceeded to move slowly around one another, maintaining eye contact throughout. Their bodies were held in such a way as to expose the thighs, making their legs appear very long. This display lasted for about 25 seconds. It does not appear to have been described in the standard works. Both pipits were subsequently seen carrying food for their young.

LAURENCE N. ROSE and STEVE WOOLFALL
1 Adelphi Street, Lancaster

Dr C. H. Fry has commented that this behaviour recalls an aggressive encounter between two males. Eds

Apparent hybridisation between Goldcrest and Firecrest On 9th July 1978, in Wendover Woods, Buckinghamshire, I located a singing male Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus*. During 15 minutes' observation it sang continuously, and was seen to chase another *Regulus*. On 10th, it was singing about 20m from its position on 9th, and again chased a *Regulus*; on 11th and 12th, it was still present, but singing much less and from various places within an area of about $\frac{1}{4}$ ha; on 13th, it was singing only occasionally and a *Regulus* was seen nearby. As I approached the area on 14th, I heard a Firecrest give two or three song bursts and saw two *Regulus* copulating; after a series of calls from the male and a brief chase, they separated. I identified the female as a Goldcrest *R. regulus*; she quickly disappeared, but I heard Goldcrest calls subsequently. An hour later, I returned and saw the male Firecrest following the female Goldcrest through

the upper branches of a Norway spruce *Picea abies*; during late afternoon the female was still in the area, but again disappeared suddenly. On 15th, the Firecrest chased another *Regulus* some distance and remained agitated, with crest raised for several seconds. While searching the trees, I located a nest in the area in which the female Goldcrest had disappeared on several occasions, about 10m from the ground and $\frac{1}{3}$ m from the end of a horizontal branch in a Norway spruce; it proved to be occupied. The male Firecrest appeared close by and sang several times; the female Goldcrest left the nest, but soon returned through the branches. Throughout the next half-hour, the male remained close to the nest and sang only occasionally, but again he chased another *Regulus*. During 16th-20th, the female continued sitting and the male sang only on a few occasions. From 22nd to 28th, the male was not recorded at all, but on 28th both male Firecrest and female Goldcrest were seen to visit the nest with food, and from this date until 12th August both regularly took food to the nest. During the early period of feeding, the Firecrest was much bolder than the Goldcrest when approaching the nest, but he became more hesitant during the observation period and began to leave the nest in a secretive manner, whereas the Goldcrest continued to leave directly in a short flight to the surrounding cover. Also during the early stages, both remained in the nest for several minutes after feeding the young or until the other parent arrived. On 12th August, young were heard in the nest. On 13th, the male Firecrest was recorded for the last time. On 17th, a young bird was seen on the edge of the nest, and on 18th two young were being fed by the female Goldcrest. One young, seen at close range, was identical in plumage to a typical young Goldcrest.

The evidence suggests hybridisation between Firecrest and Goldcrest. The only previous suggestion of this in Britain was in Suffolk in 1974 (F. K. Cobb, 1976, *Brit. Birds* 69: 447-451).

R. I. THORPE

c/o 46 Drove Road, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire

Hybrid Tree × House Sparrow paired with House Sparrow There are several records of Tree Sparrows *Passer montanus* paired with House Sparrows *P. domesticus* and of hybrids between the two (e.g. *Brit. Birds* 50: 79-81). On 17th June 1979, at Bolton Abbey, North Yorkshire, I found a male hybrid sparrow paired with a female House Sparrow and feeding young in the nest in a cottage roof beside a car park. The male behaved exactly like a normal House Sparrow, picking up food scraps from the car park. At a glance, however, it looked like a Tree Sparrow: small and neat (but with the more angular head of a House Sparrow). The large bill, however, was glossy black; its crown, nape and sides of neck were bright pinkish-chestnut (like Tree), with darker, reddish-chestnut edges (like House) and a suffusion of grey along the crown; its cheeks were white with a large, square blackish patch (greyer on right side) and it had a white collar (like Tree); its lores were black and its bib more extensive than on Tree, breaking into mottles on its chest; its upperparts were like Tree, including a greyish-sandy rump, but it had a broad, complete white bar across the median coverts (like House); its underparts were pale grey-buff, cleaner

and less grey than on House Sparrow. Although clearly a hybrid, it looked much closer to a Tree Sparrow, and it is interesting that it had successfully paired with an apparently normal female House Sparrow. R. A. HUME

56 Western Way, Sandy, Bedfordshire

Seventy-five years ago...

'SUPPOSED BLACK WOODPECKER IN NOTTINGHAMSHIRE. A few days after Christmas of 1907 Mr. Francis Hall was walking in his grounds at Park Hall, near Mansfield, when a bird flew across in front of him and settled on the stem of a big tree. I may here say that Mr. Hall has also property in Canada, where he spends a portion of each year. Directly he saw the bird he said to himself, "Why, it is a Cock-of-the-woods"—the popular name of the Canadian Northern Woodpecker. After watching the bird for some time he saw it was shorter in length and stouter than the Canadian bird, with which he is quite familiar and of which he has a stuffed specimen at Park Hall. The bird then flew deeper amongst the trees and was lost to sight. Two or three days after, Mrs. Hall, when looking out of the billiard-room window, saw a strange bird in an old thorn tree on the edge of the lawn and drew Mr. Hall's attention to it. He at once saw it was the same bird and got a pair of field-glasses, and both he and Mrs. Hall had time to look at it before it flew away. This quite confirmed his former opinion that it was a Black Woodpecker (*Picus martius*), and had he known that the occurrence of the bird in this country was not yet authenticated he could have procured the specimen, for he had ample time to get his gun. Mr. Hall is quite familiar with the three British Woodpeckers, and says the bird he saw was half as large again as the Green Woodpecker, and was black with a scarlet top to its head. J. WHITAKER.' (*Brit. Birds* 1: 386, May 1908)

Letter

Acquisition of summer plumage through loss of pale feather-tips

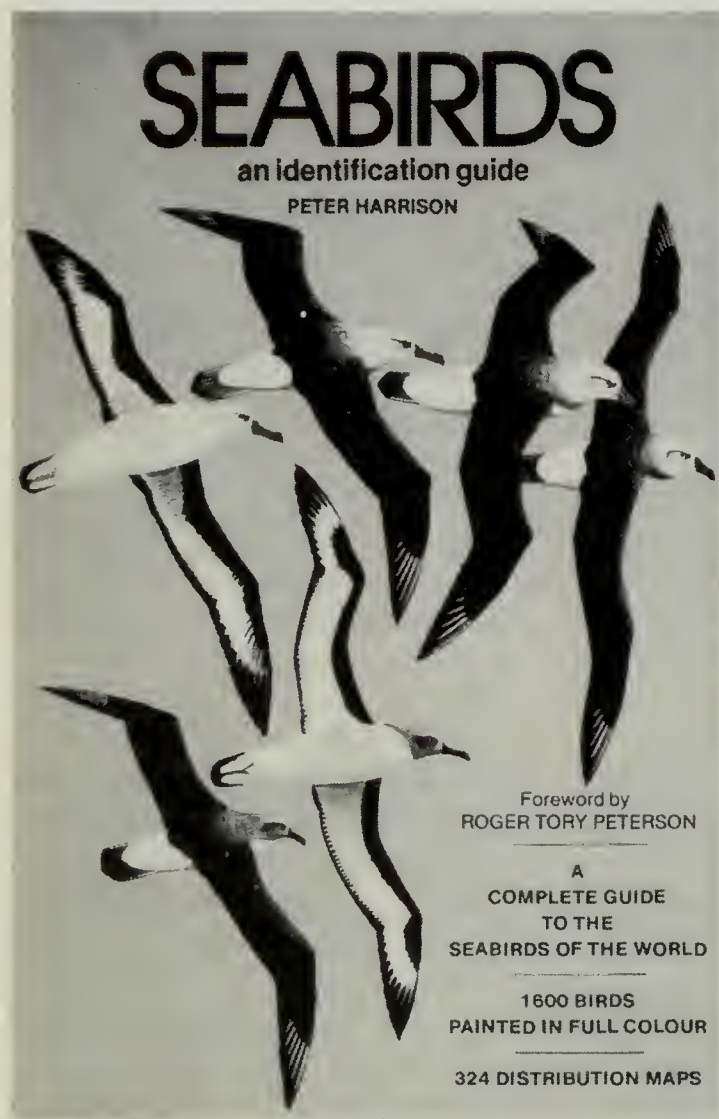
Several species which have only one moult each year (a complete one, in autumn) acquire summer plumage by the loss of pale feather-tips or fringes, which reveals the underlying more uniform summer coloration. This occurs, for example, in Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*, Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla* and several other finches. 'Wear' or 'abrasion' is invariably said to be the process by which this plumage-change takes place, implying that the pale tips are rubbed off by contact with another surface. I suggest, however, that these terms are inappropriate and misleading, because the change actually results from some process linked to the bird's acquisition of breeding condition, in which the pale tips become brittle and crumble or fall away during preening. No 'wear' or 'abrasion' actually takes place, and, hypothetically, I believe that breeding plumage would be acquired even if the bird were constrained in some way so that its plumage could not touch another surface. The change from winter to summer plumage can take place within a few days in spring (the Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus* being a good example), and the phenomenon is well known to aviculturists. Close examination of the pale tips shows that they split and crumble away, leaving a neat black or coloured edge. It should be stressed that this process is quite different from the correctly described wear and fading which is a gradual process affecting the pale tips and fringes of some other groups of birds, notably immature gulls (*Laridae*).

JOHN R. MATHER

Eagle Lodge, Aspin Lane, Knaresborough, North Yorkshire

Announcements

'Seabirds' Peter Harrison's new book is published by Croom Helm this month. You can obtain it *now* with the special pre-publication reduction (£2.50 off) available only to *BB* subscribers: £13.45 instead of £15.95. Please use the order form on page vii at once, before the full price comes into effect.



Birds wintering in the Mediterranean Region The First Conference on Birds Wintering in the Mediterranean Region will be held at the Lunigiana Natural History Museum, Aulla (Massa Carrara), Italy, during 23rd-25th February 1984. The conference is open to anyone interested in ecology, ethology, distribution and migration of birds wintering in the Mediterranean Region. Registration fees will be in the region of £13. Further details and registration forms are available from Dr Almo Farina, Museum of Natural History of Lunigiana, Fortezza della Brunella, 54011 Aulla, Italy.

IBCC/EOAC Conference The cost of this Monday-Friday conference on surveys, censuses and atlas work (for details see *Brit. Birds* 75: 232-233, 592-593) will be £120.00, including conference fee, food, accommodation and excursion. Places are still available, but bookings will close on 29th July. Application forms are obtainable from R. J. Fuller, BTO, Beech Grove, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 5NR.

'A Natural History of British Birds' This new 350-page book by Eric Simms is delightfully illustrated—in colour as well as in black-and-white—by Robert Gillmor. It will be published by J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd on 23rd June. *BB* readers can order their copies now, through British BirdShop (see page vii).

Requests

Auk records The RSPB is assessing the effects of the seabird wreck that occurred in February 1983 and would like details of the following: (a) inland records of auks of any species (dead or alive); (b) records of live or dead Little Auks *Alle alle* on beaches; and (c) records of Little Auk passage at sea. This influx will also form the subject of a paper. Please send any records to Chris Harbard, RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

Crossbills and Parrot Crossbills in 1982/83 All sightings between September 1982 and the end of March 1983 of birds of either species, together with as much detail as possible (e.g. flock size and species/age/sex-composition, feeding habits, habitat, direction of movement of migrants) are required for a proposed paper on the influx of Crossbills *Loxia curvirostra* and Parrot Crossbills *L. pytyopsittacus* into Britain and Ireland during autumn/winter 1982/83. Please send details of records to Graham P. Catley, 13 West Acridge, Barton-on-Humber, South Humberside DN18 5AJ.

Bombay NHS centenary The Bombay Natural History Society was founded by six amateur naturalists in India in 1883. The Society will be celebrating its centenary on 15th September 1983, and is keen to make the centenary celebrations an occasion for re-establishing contacts with all those in Great Britain who have at any time been members of the Society or been associated with its work. Any old photographs along with reminiscences will be welcomed and valued by the Society. All old members of the Society who respond to this request will be sent details of the celebrations, and their involvement in the centenary will be welcomed. Please write to Dr A. N. D. Nanavati, Honorary Secretary, Bombay Natural History Society, Hornbill House, Shaheed Bhagat Singh Road, Bombay 400 023.

News and comment

Robin Prytherch and Mike Everett

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

The Camargue At long last, this famous wetland on the Rhône delta in southern France is to be protected, under the 1971 Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (the Ramsar Convention). The acceptance of the proposal in 'French' overcomes a diplomatic obstacle which for 11 years prevented France and some other French-speaking countries from joining the Convention. The treaty, which is administered by the International Union for

Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, now covers 264 nature reserves in 33 countries. (*Habitat*)

Greenland Whitefronts safe? The status and population of the Greenland race of the White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons flavirostris* is the subject of international concern. In order that essential research can be undertaken, and to help the population of this distinctive race, a three-year moratorium on

hunting was introduced (in October 1982) in Ireland, a major wintering ground for this goose. After only one season, though, there is pressure from the shooters to rescind the moratorium and we can only hope that the Irish government stands firm.

Scilly sailings J. Williamson has sent us information on extra sailings to the Isles of Scilly this autumn. During October, there will be an improved service, with a return trip Penzance-St Mary's-Penzance on every Saturday (in addition to the Monday-Friday sailings). The period return fare is now a horrifying £30.00, but there is a new 4-day return fare of £22.50 for those prepared to book in advance (who would dare!). Full details from the Isles of Scilly Steamship Co. Ltd, Quay Street, Penzance, Cornwall.

Bob Spencer Formal appreciations of Bob's 28 years at the BTO and his immense contribution to bird-ringing and ornithology generally will no doubt appear elsewhere, but a short personal note is in order here. I first met Bob in his Romford Ringing Station days and again later when Bradwell Bird Observatory was in its infancy. Amongst other things, I well remember cutting mistnet rides with him, and the way in which he made Malcolm Ogilvie and me sit down and write in our notebooks while he dictated to us how to age the cock Chaffinches we had caught. I also met him on the Circle Line around this time when, for reasons I have now forgotten, we talked all the way from Liverpool Street to Charing Cross about invasions by Pallas's Sandgrouse . . . Later, I knew Bob through his three terms on RSPB Council, and even swapped blows (gently—for that is Bob's way) with him once or twice over the pros and cons of ringing rare breeding birds; finally, of course, we worked together on this feature for an all-too-short year. To me, Bob's wisdom and kindness have been bywords for years: well done, Bob, and our sincere thanks. Even if you're not going to read out those famous ringing return letters at Swanwick in future, please don't disappear into obscurity in your northern fastness . . . (ME)

Auk wreck By late February it was clear that the largest-ever recorded kill of seabirds had occurred along the British east coast. Severe weather seems to have been the cause, resulting in some 18,000 birds found dead by 28th February on beaches from north Scotland to Kent. There were over 17,000 auks, those identified including nearly 8,000

Razorbills *Alca torda*, over 4,400 Guillemots *Uria aalge*, 800 Puffins *Fratercula arctica* and 663 Little Auks *Alle alle*. Ringing recoveries indicate that many of these birds were from British colonies (the Little Auks excepted, of course!), although there have also been one or two recoveries of Icelandic Guillemots. The Razorbill numbers are especially alarming, since three-quarters of the world population breeds in Britain and Ireland. The Little Auk wreck seems unprecedented: especially bearing in mind that at least 5,000 were also seen alive during February. Further details appear on pages 240-241, and Chris Harbard is collecting information for the RSPB and for a summary paper (see page 237).

Norfolk Breeding Bird Survey We are very sad to learn from B. D. Harding, the organiser of this survey, that, in his view, 'there is no point in continuing the survey any further'. He has stated that, after three years, large tracts of the county remain unsurveyed and that there is no possibility of the survey being completed by the projected date, 1984. A hard core of observers have done the bulk of the work, but have concentrated mostly in the same areas each year. Other observers in the county and some of the county's ornithological organisations have, apparently, failed to contribute, causing this collapse of the survey. As B. D. Harding has commented: 'May this be a salutary lesson to other counties involved in similar projects.' We wonder whether it is perhaps not too late, even now, for Norfolk ornithologists to rally round B. D. Harding and bring this ambitious tetrad breeding bird survey project to as successful a conclusion as the one with which he was concerned in Bedfordshire (*Bedfordshire Bird Atlas*, 1979). (Contributed by JTRS)

Syrian Woodpeckers must hate Jays In an interesting paper, Shaler Mann and Ofer Hochberg (*Israel: land & nature* 8: 10-14) detail the changes in distribution of three bird species within Israel, relative to human developments. One such change concerns the spread of Syrian Woodpeckers *Dendrocopos syriacus* and Jays *Garrulus glandarius* into plantations of the introduced pecan *Carya illinoensis*. The pecan nuts are rich in proteins and are greatly liked by both species (as well as others). But the Jays have a problem: they are apparently incapable of cracking open the nuts, so how do they feed on them? Let the authors tell the story . . .

'At almost every early morning observa-

tion, which began with the simultaneous arrival of woodpeckers and the jays, we could see that the first pecan cracked open by a woodpecker was grabbed immediately by a jay swooping down from a distance—always after the nut was brought to the anvil and in perfect timing with the cracking activities. On at least two separate occasions we saw a second pecan snatched as well. These observations point at a kleptoparasitic relationship model by which the Syrian woodpeckers have to sacrifice the first nut to the jays before they themselves can eat.' And, in the same journal, another 'amusement' . . .

... Hume's Tawny Owl howler In the course of regular observations on leopards *Panthera pardus* in the Judean desert, researchers also heard Hume's Tawny Owls *Strix butleri* calling throughout the winter. Imagine their surprise when, late one sunny January morning, one of them heard a Hume's Tawny Owl calling from among the rocks near their camp. A quick check revealed not an owl but a White-crowned Black Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga* sounding the owl calls! Whilst pondering how the wheatear could learn sounds heard only at night, the bemused observer then looked up to see a real Hume's Tawny Owl calling from the nearby cliff top. The wheatear mimicked the calls with amazing accuracy, just as it can, apparently, repeat the courtship and territorial shrieks of male hyrax *Procavia capensis*. Be warned and beware!

Helpful Barn Owls In Malaysia, the Barn Owl *Tyto alba* was, until recently, quite rare. Since 1968, however, a rapid change for the better has been taking place. This success is due to a 'plague' of three species of rats *Rattus* which thrive in the plantations of oil palms *Elaeis guineensis*. The owls hunt in the dense forest-like plantations (with around 220 palms per hectare) by using a 'perch and wait' technique. With an estimated 240 rats per hectare, the wait is not long. Breeding is successful, with normal broods of six or seven chicks, and many pairs are using nest boxes. In 1979, rats were estimated to cause losses of up to £22 million. Once poison has temporarily reduced rat populations, the Barn Owls' predation can slow the recovery, but eventually they make little impact. By increasing the time interval between successive poisonings, the Barn Owls can reduce material and labour costs and lessen the impact of pesticides on the environment. Some of the oil-palm companies and their estate managers are now very aware of the

benefits of Barn Owls; let's hope the companies continue to promote this species in Peninsular Malaysia: the 'farmer's friend' the world over. (*New Scientist*)

'Irish Birds' The latest issue (volume 2, no. 2: 1982), edited by C. D. Hutchinson, includes four papers, three mainly of local Irish interest, but one on 'The breeding population of the Peregrine Falcon in Ireland in 1981' by D. Norriss, H. J. Wilson and D. Browne, which gives the encouraging information that the total breeding population in Ireland in 1981 was estimated after surveys in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland to be at least 278 pairs. Mean brood size (2.15) and productivity (0.95) were both low, but this was attributed to the unusual weather causing widespread breeding failure. There are also notes on three species new to Ireland (Pied Wheatear, American Coot and Black Kite) and, of course, the annual 'Irish Bird Report' (the 29th, for 1981) and report on ringing in Ireland in 1981. With over 100 information-packed pages, this is a good buy at £3.00 plus 50p postage (Irish Punds, not sterling). It is obtainable from Business Editor, c/o Irish Wildbird Conservancy, South View, Church Road, Greystones, Co. Wicklow, Ireland.

New Recorder for Hertfordshire Peter Walton, Twin Oaks, Rabley Heath, Welwyn, has taken over from B. Taggart as Recorder for Hertfordshire.

Indecisive eagles For several years now, a pair of White-tailed Eagles *Haliaeetus albicilla* has settled on a territory which straddles the West German-East German border. Nesting attempts have been made on both sides of the border, but the West German watchers are hoping that the eagles finally settle on their side, so that they can then proudly proclaim their fifth breeding pair. The other four pairs breed successfully, but evidence so far indicates that the young disperse to the east! This seems hardly fair, since 80 pairs are known in East Germany. (*WWF News*)

More collective names Derek Goodwin offers these: a PLEASURE of pigeons; a PESTILENCE of Peregrines; a RAPACITY of Goshawks; a MARVEL of magpies; an EFFICIENCY of Starlings (surely, he adds, a deserved collective noun if ever there was one?); a DELUSION of twitchers; a CARPING of editors and a NIT-PICKING of book reviewers. One of us is rather glad that no-one has suggested a RUDENESS of Robins. That would be the end!

Recent reports



R. A. Hume and K. Allsopp

These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records

Dates refer to February unless stated otherwise.

The mild westerly weather experienced throughout January continued until 5th, when an anticyclone developed over mid Atlantic and subsequently extended to Scandinavia. The winds changed from cold northerlies to even colder northeasterlies, bringing some snow and harsh frosts. From 13th to the end of the month, the centre of pressure moved eastwards across the country and into western Europe, with the winds turning easterly, then southeasterly, bringing a slow rise in temperatures.

Seabirds

After a winter notably free from seabird incidents, with little oiling, February produced the largest seabird kill ever recorded in

Britain. A low-pressure system over Iceland moved rapidly into the North Sea and was followed by very strong northeasterly winds. A large passage of **Little Auks** *Alle alle* occurred off the British east coast from 5th onwards. About 660 stranded and dead Little Auks were reported from the Moray Firth south to Sussex and west to Somerset, and hundreds of live birds taking refuge in sheltered harbours were noted in northeast England. Only three were reported from Orkney, but at the Isle of May (Fife) small numbers were seen daily and 76 moved north in one hour on 9th. A total of 15 passed Eyemouth (Borders) in ten minutes on 11th (in gales, snow and hail: 'Wishing them luck!' said the observer), but most were farther south: hundreds in Tyne & Wear and Cleveland and, after one on 5th, 81 on 6th,



93 & 94. Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea*, North Yorkshire, February 1983 (above, P. Vines; right, David M. Cottridge)



161 on 8th and 200 on 9th passed Filey Brigg (North Yorkshire). About 40 were seen off the Suffolk coast and clearly many entered The Wash (Lincolnshire/Norfolk) and found themselves in trouble. Small numbers were found inland in a band south of Lincolnshire and The Wash through Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire to London. **Puffins** *Fratercula arctica* were also swept inland—one was fetched in with the milk from a front doorstep at Shenley (Hertfordshire) for example—and both **Razorbills** *Alca torda* and **Guillemots** *Uria aalge* were also involved (and both reached the River Thames at Hammersmith, Greater London, on 19th). Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire both had their first recorded Razorbills this century. Back on the coast, over 17,000 auks were found dead (14% in Scotland, 16% from Northumberland to Cleveland, 31% from North Yorkshire to Lincolnshire, 35% in East Anglia and 4% in Kent), with over 800 being Puffins and, oddly, Razorbills outnumbering Guillemots by almost two to one (for further details, see page 238). Very few were oiled, and starvation seems to have been the main cause. Two **Brünnich's Guillemots** *U. lomvia* were found dead in northeast Scotland. A **Gannet** *Sula bassana* was found at Ramsey (Cambridgeshire) and a **Storm Petrel** *Hydrobates pelagicus* was picked up at a factory in Ipswich (Suffolk) on 9th. Earlier, a petrel, probably **Leach's** *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*, had been blown inland from Cockerham (Lancashire) on 30th January.

Red-throated Divers *Gavia stellata* included 343 at Foreness Point (Kent) on 19th January, and an influx in hard weather of 30 at Walney Island (Cumbria) on 12th. **Black-**

throated Divers *G. arctica* included 15 in Scapa Flow (Orkney) and inland reports from two Derbyshire sites and Chasewater (Staffordshire/West Midlands) in mid month. A **Great Skua** *Stercorarius skua* rested at Stanpit Marsh (Dorset) on 6th, and at Peterhead (Grampian) in mid January there were four **Pomarine**s *S. pomarinus* and one **Arctic Skua** *S. parasiticus*. **Ross's Gulls** *Rhodostethia rosea* remained in Northern Ireland and Shetland, and yet another stayed at Filey Brigg from 17th to 20th (plates 93 & 94)—a chance for many people to see this fabulous bird. **Glaucous Gulls** *Larus hyperboreus* remained unremarkable in numbers, but **Iceland**s *L. glaucoideus* were frequent—30 to 35 in Orkney (where there were very few Glaucous), five in Northumberland in January, when there were three in Kent, nine in Grampian, 40 between Scalloway and Lerwick (Shetland) alone in the far north, eight near Oban (Strathclyde) on 14th and seven at Mallaig (Highland) on 20th, three at Filey Brigg, three in Derbyshire and Staffordshire and singles on Anglesey (Gwynedd) and at Chew Valley Lake (Avon). In Ireland, there were 35 Glaucous and 18 Icelanders at Killybegs (Co. Donegal) at the end of January and 16 Glaucous and seven Icelanders at Clogherhead (Co. Louth) on 19th: really extraordinary concentrations. Five Glaucous were noted at Holme (Norfolk). Birds showing characters of the difficult race *L. g. kumlieni* were exceptionally frequent, being noted at Lancaster (Lancashire),

Stromness (Orkney) (three), Shetland, Plymouth (Devon) and Killybegs (two). Elimination of hybrid or aberrant birds is not easy, but some of these, at least, are likely to have been genuine Kumlien's. **Little Gulls** *L. minutus* included 24 at Kilmore Quay (Co. Wexford) on 20th. **Ring-billed Gulls** *L. delawarensis* included four in Co. Cork throughout January and February, one in Shetland, one in Cornwall (plates 95 & 96), and one in the roost at Chew Valley Lake from 22nd to 29th January: will any be discovered in a colony of Common Gulls *L. canus* in the summer? **Mediterranean Gulls** *L. melanocephalus* were thinly scattered, but three birds at Gerrard's Cross (Buckinghamshire) in February and March were remarkable, as were eight or nine—up to six together—at Chew. The **Forster's Tern** *Sterna forsteri* in Co. Dublin remained into February.

Waders and wildfowl

Another wintering **Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola* turned up at Chislet (Kent) in late January, and a **Temminck's Stint** *Calidris temminckii* wintered at Rutland Water (Leicestershire). Both the Suffolk **Western Sandpiper** *C. mauri* and the Surrey **Baird's** *C. bairdii* already noted survived some hard weather; at Eastbourne (East Sussex) a **Lesser Yellowlegs** *T. flavipes* remained from 2nd to 25th, despite being seen with ice

95 & 96. First-winter Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*, Cornwall, February 1983 (Mike Frost)

coating its legs. **Whimbrels** *Numenius phaeopus* occurred at Walney Island on 12th and throughout the winter in Sandwich Bay (Kent), with another at Shellness (Kent) on 22nd January: an odd selection of wintering waders. A **Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia* wintered at Lisagriffin (Co. Cork) and a **White Stork** *Ciconia ciconia* in Suffolk (note that the latter species is extinct as a 'natural' breeder in Holland now, but birds are bred and released from captive stock and wander



widely). The two **Glossy Ibises** *Plegadis falcinellus* continued to live in Kent. A **Lesser White-fronted Goose** *Anser erythropus* stayed at Holkham (Norfolk) from 21st into March, and 46 **Whitefronts** *A. albifrons* of the Greenland race *flavirostris* wintered at The Loons (Orkney). There were 14 **Snow Geese** *Anser caerulescens* in the Pagham and Selsey Bill (West Sussex) area from 19th January into March—acting very wild! The Kirkwall (Orkney) **King Eider** *Somateria spectabilis* remained until 6th, and both **Smews** *Mergus albellus* and equally rare up there, **Goosanders** *M. merganser* were also to be seen in the islands. The **Ring-necked Duck** *Aythya collaris* remained at Llanerchdydd Pool (Powys) most of the month; fascinating *Aythya* hybrids, apparently part *collaris*, appeared at Welney (Norfolk) and at Blunham (Bedford): different birds. Their origin poses interesting questions—escapes, or the progeny of true vagrants paired with some Palearctic duck? **Ferruginous Ducks** *A. nyroca* were to be found at Blunham, and also at Ramsley Reservoir (Derbyshire) on 3rd January. **Ruddy Ducks** *Oxyura jamaicensis* continue to enjoy a population boom, and respective January and February counts of 758 and 713 at Chew and Blagdon (Avon) broke all records for this lively little duck.

Passerines and Swift

The **Swift** *Apus apus* has no right to appear in a February report, but three were reported from Kent; there was a **Swallow** *Hirundo rustica* at Cley (Norfolk), a **Bluethroat** *Luscinia svecica* and a **Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe* in Kent and many **Chiffchaffs** *Phylloscopus collybita* in the southwest during the month (after 14 Chiffchaffs had been trapped at Chew in December and January). In Devon in December, there were reports of a **Ring Ouzel** *Turdus torquatus* and a **Yellow-browed Warbler** *P. inornatus* in December. A **Red-throated Pipit** *Anthus cervinus* was found on Guernsey (Channel Islands) on 22nd January. The **Rock Thrush** *Monticola saxatilis* already noted from Sheppey (Kent) remained until at least 26th, but its tameness

(at times), damaged foot and messy ventral plumage caused some observers to be less than enthusiastic about it. Early in March, a **Rose-coloured Starling** *Sturnus roseus* appeared at Deeping St James (Cambridgeshire/Lincolnshire) to complete a most odd assemblage of winter birds.

Finally, **Crossbills** *Loxia curvirostra* continued to be apparent in many places—up to 50 in several south Northumberland localities, and many in north Derbyshire where up to 15 **Parrot Crossbills** *L. pytyopsittacus* and a



fine **Two-barred Crossbill** *L. leucoptera* provided unique birdwatching for those lucky enough to see all three species into March. Parrot Crossbills were also reported from near Reading (Berkshire), at Virginia Water (Surrey) and on Cannock Chase (Staffordshire), where common Crossbills remained in several areas.

Latest news

Apart from usual summer migrants, only notable birds in early April were **Ring-necked Duck** at Loch Insh (Highland), **Ring-billed Gull** at Radipole Lake (Dorset) and **Lesser Yellowlegs** at Bexington (Dorset). Long-stayers still present included **Western Sandpiper** at Felixstowe (Suffolk), **King Eider** at Golspie (Sutherland) and **Surf Scoter** *Melanitta perspicillata* at Spey Bay (Grampian).

Reviews

The Wildfowl of Britain and Europe. By Malcolm Ogilvie; illustrated by N. W. Cusa and Peter Scott. Oxford University Press, 1983. 84 pages; 30 colour plates. £6.95.

The plates of the ducks, geese and swans of the West Palearctic are those by N. W. Cusa and

Peter Scott with which we are thoroughly familiar from *BWP* volume I. The idea of taking these illustrations and providing a new, short text for each species, to produce a slim (84-page) volume, did not appeal to me personally until I actually saw this book. In fact, it works very well indeed, with Malcolm Ogilvie's text being wholly appropriate to the new format. There can be little clash with *BWP* itself, for this book will particularly appeal to the large number of birdwatchers for whom *BWP* would be rather too advanced. Thus, this volume provides a vehicle for the useful wider use of the excellent *BWP* plates. It is apparently a forerunner for a series along similar lines. It can be thoroughly recommended to anyone who does not own a copy of *BWP* volume I.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

Birds New to Britain and Ireland. By J. T. R. Sharrock and P. J. Grant. T. & A. D. Poyser, Calton, 1982. 280 pages; 81 black-and-white photographs; over 80 line-drawings. £12.60.

This book presents, in order of occurrence, accounts of all first records (and a few fully documented seconds) for Britain and Ireland between 1946 and 1980, a total of 83 reprints of papers originally published in the journal *British Birds*. Vignettes, maps depicting breeding range, a summary of subsequent records in the British Isles, and further hints on identification are appended to each account. The text concludes with a summary of occurrences by time and place, while the final pages of the book reproduce 81 plates of 'first-sighting' photographs for 32 species.

The book's main aims—providing valuable identification reference material and collecting under one cover the exciting moments of 35 years' rarity hunting—are clearly achieved. This book does, however, go much farther. The thrill of discovery is apparent throughout. Though each account follows the same general format, the occasional anecdotal note, of human as well as avian behaviour, adds variety to the whole. The book will be appreciated for its ease of reference. Not everyone has ready access to a long run of *BB*. Its value as a reference book is further enhanced as many of the vagrants have occurred in plumages not described in popular field guides.

The book demonstrates how bird identification has evolved. One cannot but be impressed by the increased sophistication of birdwatchers during the period, while still marvelling at the immense care with which occurrences were documented throughout. It is too easily forgotten that 20 years ago birdwatchers were without many of the identification aids which we take for granted, and confirmation of a bird's identity often required considerable detective work. In many parts of the Western World, first records are still confirmed by specimen rather than detailed description. It is a tribute to British and Irish birdwatchers that careful and thorough documentation has, since 1948, removed any need to collect a specimen.

The written input by the compilers is very small, but nevertheless adds greatly to the book's usefulness. Sharrock's up-date of subsequent occurrences is straightforward and unequivocal. Grant had the unenviable task of summarising identification features. His summaries are concise and designed to augment rather than re-iterate identification details covered in the main text. Thus, they tend to get briefer as the book progresses. The brevity of some summaries may at times make identification of difficult species appear simpler than in reality. Nevertheless, his summaries are a welcome supplement and greatly increase the value of the book as an identification manual. The distribution maps are a useful feature, though the inclusion of migration routes and wintering areas would perhaps have been worthwhile. The plates are inevitably of very variable standard, being photos of the birds involved, but most show well their salient points. Vignettes accompany all the species accounts. Some are from the original paper, but the majority are new. These latter are generally excellent, though one or two are to my mind not terribly accurate, suggesting the artist's unfamiliarity with the living bird.

The book is stylishly and attractively produced: hallmarks of the house of Poyser. One glaring omission occurs in Fig. 14 of the White-tailed Plover account where localities 5 and 6 are not detailed in the legend. Other errors are few and minor. It would be churlish to criticise further. This compilation will surely be an overwhelming success and find its way on to the bookshelves of all serious birders. I heartily recommend it and look forward to Volume 2, which must certainly be less than 35 years in the making at the rate of recent additions!

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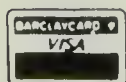
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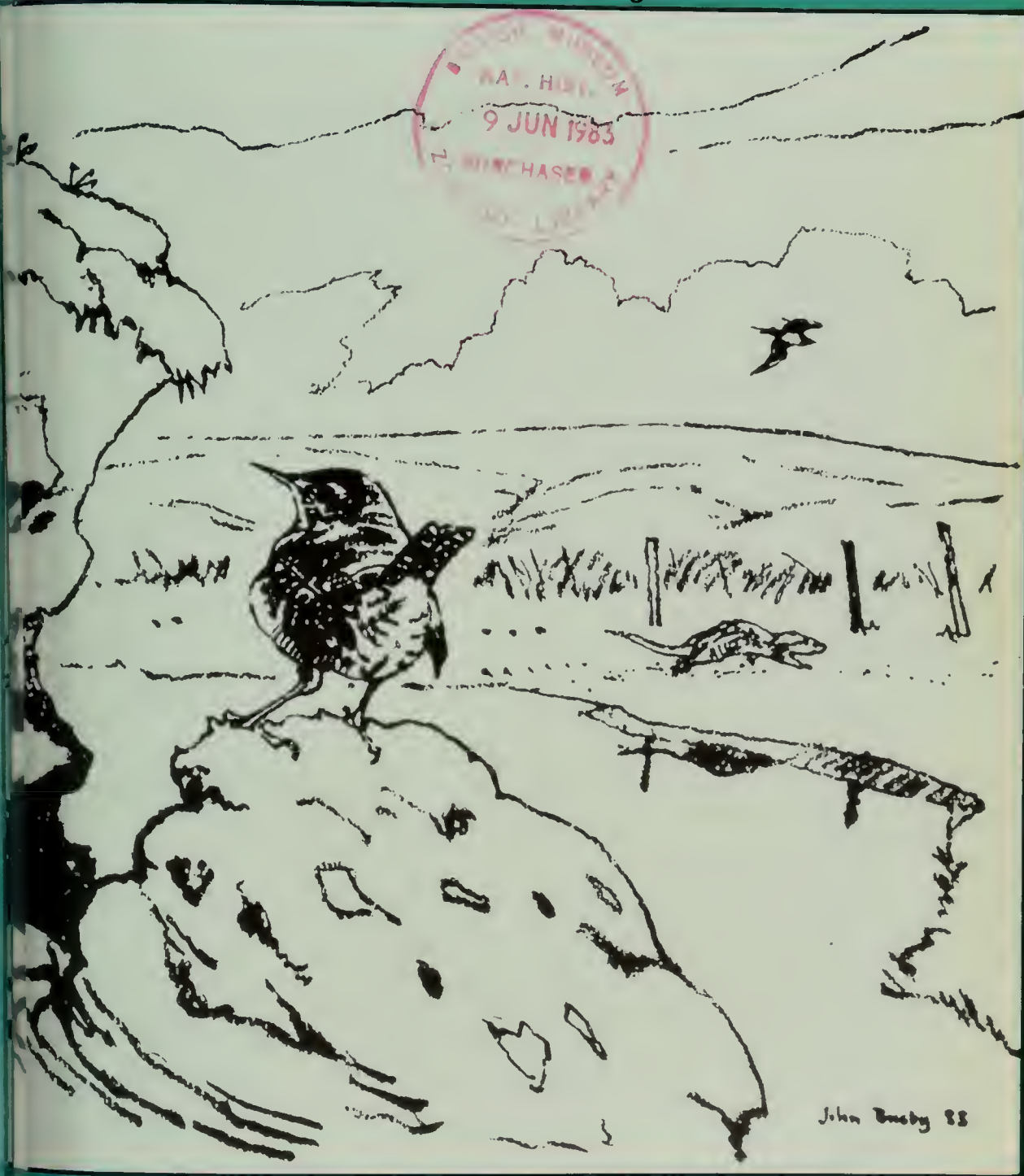
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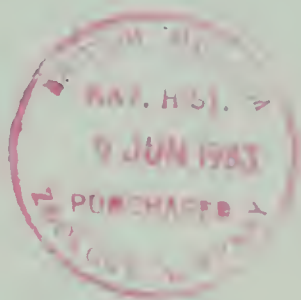
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British Birds

VOLUME 76 NUMBER 6 JUNE 1983



Rock Sparrow: new to Britain and Ireland



S. J. M. Gantlett and R. G. Millington

At 08.00 GMT on 14th June 1981, we were walking from the 'North Hide' at Cley, Norfolk, towards the Coastguard's carpark. RGM idly lifted his binoculars to look at a couple of small birds feeding on the ground under the Eye Field fence. Without speaking, he intimated that it might be worthwhile for SJMG also to raise his binoculars.



97. Rock Sparrow *Petronia petronia*, Spain, May 1961 (Arthur Gilpin)

One of the birds was a male Linnet *Carduelis cannabina*, but the other was a sparrow-like bird with a boldly striped head. The initial thoughts that it might be a Lapland Bunting *Calcarius lapponicus* were quickly superseded by thoughts of Nearctic sparrows and various rare buntings. RGM then suggested that it might be a Rock Sparrow *Petronia petronia*. At this point, the bird flitted up onto the fence, exhibiting a shortish dark tail tipped with prominent white spots, which confirmed the identification for SJMG, who was familiar with Rock Sparrow in Europe.

For the next ten minutes, we watched the bird, at ranges of about 50-100m, as it fed along the ruts in the turfed gravel strip between the beach and the field. It flitted up onto the fence a few times and we both compiled detailed descriptions. SJMG then left to alert other observers: J. McLaughlin, M. Eldridge and C. Jones were fortunate to arrive in time and joined RGM still watching the bird. At 08.30 it flew up, for no apparent reason, and headed strongly westward across the Eye Field. It was never seen again, in spite of much searching.

It was a sandy-brown sparrow similar in size to House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, but plumper in proportions, with the strikingly striped head the most obvious feature. The following detailed description is compiled from notes made at the time and immediately afterwards:

HEAD Broad crown-stripe creamy/off-white.	width, meeting just above bill. Supercilium
Dark brown lateral crown-stripes of even	long, extending from before eye, flaring out

broader behind eye and curving down onto sides of nape, clear buffy-white with distinct yellowish-peach wash towards rear. Dark brown eye-stripe extending back from eye, broadest immediately behind eye and at rear (where forming large dark area on upper rear ear-coverts). Narrow, but distinct, pale creamy eye-ring. Ear-coverts and lores warm buffish-grey, bordered below by slightly darker smudgy grey moustachial stripe. Submoustachial stripe and chin off-white, with pale grey-brown smudgy malar stripes.

UPPERPARTS Mantle and scapulars buffish-grey strongly streaked with blackish-brown and with yellowish feather edgings. Strong pale cream-coloured 'braces' down either side of mantle. Rump and longish uppertail-coverts buffish-grey streaked lightly with dull brown. Median and greater coverts dark centred, edged sandy-brown and with whitish tips forming double, narrow but distinct, wing-bars. Upper wing-bar stronger and paler, lower narrower with yellowish-

peach wash (as supercilium). Primaries and secondaries dark brown, edged paler. Large tertials blackish, edged broadly with pale warm sandy-brown and with distinct white spots on tips. Tail shortish and notched, blackish-brown with prominent creamy-white spot showing on tip at rest. White spot at tip of each tail feather, showing in flight as broken white bar at end of tail.

UNDERPARTS Off-white with subdued pale greyish-brown wash and with a distinctly darker brown smudge on sides of upper breast. Dull buff mark across throat. Flanks strongly streaked with dark brown. Small, oblong, pale clear yellow patch visible on centre of upper breast only when bird looked up when face-on, otherwise apparently obscured by throat feathers.

BARE PARTS Fairly large, conical, sparrow-like bill flesh-pink, darker grey-brown on upper mandible and tip. Eye dark. Legs and feet flesh-yellow and strikingly thick and sturdy.

An active and nervous bird, it fed on the ground in a horizontal, hunched posture, when it was stouter-looking than House Sparrow, but of a similar size. Though having a rather shuffling gait on the ground, it was bold and alert-looking when perched on the fence.

In Norfolk, 14th June 1981 was clear and sunny with a very warm southwesterly wind of about force 5. The whole of Continental Europe was bathed in a high-pressure system and, in particular, Iberia (a possible area of the bird's origin) was experiencing an exceptional heatwave at this time: Lisbon's temperature of 102°F was the highest for 13 years and in Seville it reached 111°F.

There was much visible migration in progress at Cley during the morning. Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* were passing west at the rate of about 2,000 per hour; Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus* and Turtle Doves *Streptopelia turtur* were also passing west. The Rock Sparrow, too, was probably on passage: it was not seen at 07.30 when we walked past the same spot, and it clearly left at 08.30.

Dr Colin Harrison (1982, *An Atlas of the Birds of the Western Palaearctic*) gave the range of Rock Sparrow as most of southern Europe, eastwards through Turkey and Iran to the Himalayas, and also northernmost Africa. It is described as a resident and partial migrant. The species has, however, wandered to north France, Belgium and the Netherlands. Of nine Belgian records, four were in the 19th Century, three in the 1950s and singles in 1960 and 1968; six of the seven dated records were in October and the seventh was on 1st November (in 1968). The two Dutch records were both in the 19th Century, when the species may have bred farther north (to southern Germany and Switzerland).

S. J. M. Gantlett, 14 Bracken Way, Grimston, Norfolk
R. G. Millington, The Annexe, The Grange, New Buckenham, Norfolk NR16 2AU

Probable hybridisation between Chiffchaff and Willow Warbler



S. R. D. da Prato and E. S. da Prato

Separation of Chiffchaffs *Phylloscopus collybita* and Willow Warblers *P. trochilus* can be difficult in the field unless song is heard. Inexperienced observers often use terms such as 'Willow/Chiffs' to acknowledge the fact that they cannot grasp the slight difficulties caused by such factors as age, feather wear and regional variation, while both species can show considerable variation even within the same breeding area (e.g. Williamson 1974). A further problem is the possibility of hybrids between the two species occurring in the wild. In her comprehensive summary of bird hybrids, Gray (1958) quoted two instances where hybridisation was suspected: one from Spain in 1945, the other from Germany around 1900. In both cases, the claims for hybrid origin seem to rest on the birds' appearance rather than direct observations of the two species copulating or attending the same nest.

This short paper describes observations in southeast Scotland in 1982 where the evidence points strongly towards hybridisation between a male Chiffchaff and a female Willow Warbler, though actual copulation was not observed.

Study area and methods

The events described took place in a small (10.4 ha) area of scrub in a valley near Cousland, Lothian. Each year, the site holds around 40 territories of up to eight species of warblers, and in the three seasons 1979-81 detailed studies of the breeding birds and their progeny took place. This involved individually colour-ringing each adult, colour-ringing their young and checking the site daily to establish such factors as arrival and departure dates, territories and breeding success (da Prato 1980, 1981, 1982; da Prato & da Prato in press). In 1982, the emphasis changed to warbler-censusing

over a much larger area of countryside, but all the adults in the valley were still uniquely marked and their breeding success recorded. All warbler nests which produced young were found. Even when nests were destroyed by predators at the egg stage, this could be detected by changes in the behaviour of the adults and/or the disappearance of the female.

The birds and their behaviour

Of the three adults involved, the first to arrive at the site in 1982 was an unringed male Chiffchaff on the very early date of 30th March, the earliest record for any species of warbler at this site. He sang vigorously for many weeks, for part of the time against another much less assertive male Chiffchaff which arrived four days later and disappeared around the end of April. Although Chiffchaffs have held territory briefly in earlier years, they have never bred there. As the male Chiffchaff was unringed, we suspect that he was a first-year bird, since breeding adults seem to be site-faithful. Male Willow Warblers started arriving from around 12th April, and on 28th April a colour-ringed male Willow Warbler known to be at least four years old reappeared in his old territory, which was adjacent to that now held by the male Chiffchaff. This bird had bred successfully in 1981 with a female which did not return in 1982. By late April, the first female Willow Warblers appeared. One of the earliest was a female at least two years old which had successfully reared six chicks in the valley in 1981. Her mate did not return in 1982. This female was observed in the territories of both the male Willow Warbler and the male Chiffchaff.

The male Willow Warbler frequently entered the Chiffchaff's territory, but was invariably chased back into his own territory. Chasing was observed on ten occasions, three of these ending in actual fights which the Chiffchaff won: the male Willow Warbler retreating and then remaining low in the bushes. This behaviour was witnessed for just over a week, until 9th May, when the male Willow Warbler was killed, probably by the Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* which flew away from his corpse as we approached. After this, the female was the only Willow Warbler seen in the area.

The male Chiffchaff continued to sing from within his territory, but by the middle of May he did so less frequently and became more skulking. The female Willow Warbler also became unobtrusive, but in late May was watched on three occasions when feeding in the Chiffchaff's territory. In the limited time available, however, she could not be traced back to a nest. It was not until the evening of 12th June that we spent time in the Chiffchaff's territory again. The female Willow Warbler and the male Chiffchaff were both seen carrying food into a nest built on the ground on a steep, grassy slope below an elder *Sambucus nigra*. The nest was typical of a Willow Warbler's, being tucked well into and blending with the rough grass, with the opening facing down the slope. It contained seven chicks about 11 or 12 days old. The brood was colour-ringed, weighed and examined for leg colour and emargination of the sixth primary. Both adults kept up constant *Phylloscopus* 'hoocet' alarm calls throughout the time we spent at the nest, with the difference between the two species' calls very evident at such close

range. The male Chiffchaff was noticeably more skulking than the female or the many male Willow Warblers whose nests we have approached.

We returned to the nest on the morning of 13th June to photograph the young, but refrained, as the behaviour of the adults suggested the chicks were about to fledge. Only the female took food into the nest, but not before spending several minutes calling to the chicks. The male Chiffchaff constantly called from the cover of a bush a metre from the nest. After one hour's observation, the first chick emerged and quickly hopped into cover. It was immediately fed by the female, while the male continued to call. Half an hour later, all the chicks were in or around the elder bush, being fed by both parents.

We had hoped to retrap the young at 20-25 days old to check wing formulae and other measurements, but could not do so due to high winds which prevented mist-netting. The juveniles were seen as a group with the adults in various areas of the valley for up to 11 days after fledging. After this, only the male Chiffchaff was seen. The female had presumably moved out with her young.

Biometrics

Wing-lengths of the male Chiffchaff and the female Willow Warbler were both 62mm (maximum chord). The male Chiffchaff, however, was lighter: 7.8g, compared with the female Willow Warbler's 8.3g, both weights taken a few days after arrival in the valley. The chicks were examined on the evening prior to the day of fledging. None of them showed emargination of the still-growing sixth primaries. Four chicks had dark legs, and three had paler legs more typical of most Willow Warblers. The mean weight for the brood of seven was 8.6g (SD = 0.56, range 7.8-9.2). For comparison, a brood of six fathered in 1979 by the male Willow Warbler which was killed in 1982 had a mean weight at day 11 of 10.3g (SD = 0.8, range 9.4-11.1). These weights are typical for Willow Warbler chicks (mean of 32 broods at day 11, 1979-81 = 9.9g, SD = 0.9, range 8.1-11.8), as is the relatively wide range in weights within a brood. The difference between the mean weights of Willow Warbler chicks and the presumed hybrids is highly significant ($t = 3.77$, $P < 0.005$).

Discussion

Perhaps we should stress that there was no doubt whatsoever over the identification of the adult birds concerned. Biometrics, wing formula and general appearance were checked in the hand by two experienced observers. Both birds were also watched in the field. The male was seen singing on numerous occasions in typical Chiffchaff style, while his behaviour near the nest was much more wary than the many male Willow Warblers which we have watched near their nests. The female's behaviour was typical of a Willow Warbler, as was her nest, both in site and construction.

This leaves the question: could a male Willow Warbler have fathered the chicks which the Chiffchaff then helped to raise? The most likely candidate would have been the neighbouring male Willow Warbler in whose territory the female was seen. He died, however, on 9th May. By working back from

the date of fledging, 13th June, and allowing 13 days each for the nestling and the incubation periods, the eggs were laid from 12th to 18th May, presuming one egg to have been laid each day. These estimates are maxima, as we have never known Willow Warblers take more than 26 days to incubate and fledge their chicks; some birds have taken only 23 days. Also, the nest was built in the Chiffchaff's territory rather than that of the male Willow Warbler. The apparent lack of emargination of the juveniles' sixth primaries suggests Willow Warbler, but their small size and variation in leg colour were unlike all the other Willow Warbler broods which we have handled at a similar age.

We consider that the most likely explanation is that genuine hybridisation took place after the hen Willow Warbler lost her preferred mate. The male Chiffchaff's territory was immediately adjacent, females of his own species were unavailable (none was recorded, despite mist-netting in the area), and his behaviour changed around mid-May, suggesting a pairing. By this time, the 16 other male Willow Warblers in the valley were holding clearly defined territories, and most were already paired.

Summary

An instance of probable hybridisation between a male Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* and a female Willow Warbler *P. trochilus* in southeast Scotland in 1982 is described and some biometrics of the chicks are provided.

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Product reports

Items included in this feature have been submitted by the manufacturers or their agents. The reviews are the personal opinions of the reviewers; they are not the result of technical tests, but are assessments made after use in appropriate conditions (e.g. in the field). Neither *British Birds* nor the individual reviewers can accept responsibility for any adverse consequences of opinions stated, and items are accepted for review on this understanding. We aim, however, to be helpful both to our readers and to the manufacturers of goods used by birdwatchers. Eds

Panorama 8 × 20 Minnie monocular

One of the regular complaints by birdwatchers is that their binoculars (even some of the most expensive models) do not focus closely enough: how infuriating it can be to have to walk backwards away from some tame rarity. No such complaints can be directed at the 'Minnie'. This tiny (9cm),

lightweight (70g) monocular focuses from infinity down to 26cm. It is optically superb and can be used equally well for watching distant ducks on a gravel-pit or counting the hairs on the hind leg of a house-fly.

The Minnie has a rubber eye-cup, so is suitable for spectacle wearers; it comes equipped with a short, clip-on lanyard.

Despite its great versatility, this instrument could never be a bird-watcher's primary optical aid. The relatively small field of view makes it difficult to pick up birds in flight; two hands are needed to hold it steady and to focus (a smooth turning motion through $3\frac{1}{4}$ turns, which increases the total length from 9cm at infinity to 12.3cm when focused at 26cm); and, of course, there is no three-dimensional effect when using a monocular. This is, however, not just a gimmick; despite its Goon-Show-recalling name, the instrument is far more than a mere toy. It really is pocket-sized and, even in its zipped carrying-case, measures only $10.5 \times 4 \times 4$ cm. The all-round naturalists who wish to carry an optical aid in a briefcase, an anorak or a business suit at all times would, perhaps, find this the ideal choice. When testing the Minnie, I found it very entertaining to watch birds feeding on nut-containers only a couple of feet away. This suggests another possible use: for reading ring numbers of birds just outside kitchen windows.

The Minnie has many limitations, but it also has several very distinct advantages. At £33, it is certainly worth considering as a back-up to one's usual binoculars.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

Seventy-five years ago...

THE BLACK WOODPECKER IN ENGLAND. Many are the records of the occurrences of this bird in England, but it has been clearly shown that even the apparently best authenticated instances are untenable . . . On the other hand, some of the more recent records are so precise, and the bird itself is so remarkable in appearance, that they cannot be dismissed offhand. This particularly applies to the numerous reports of its appearance on the borders of Norfolk and Suffolk, in the neighbourhood of Thetford, Brandon, and Euston, perhaps the most suitable locality that could be found for it in East Anglia.

The Rev. E. T. Daubeny, in recording several instances of the supposed occurrence of this bird in Euston Park, Ixworth, and Brandon, in 1897, remarked that it was "well-known that Lord Lilford liberated some of these birds towards the end of the last century," but I could obtain no confirmation of this, and so the matter stood till the year 1903, when, much to my surprise, my friend, Mr. W. H. Tuck, informed me that a friend of his, whose name he was not at liberty to mention, brought seven or eight young Great Black Woodpeckers from Sweden in the year 1897. These were seen by Mr. Tuck, who further stated that they were placed in an aviary near Brandon for about two months, after which they were allowed to regain their liberty. This fact will, doubtless, account for the presence of the birds reported to have been seen in that neighbourhood, and perhaps for others which may have wandered further afield.

'Mr. Tuck . . . quite agrees with the writer that it is most reprehensible that birds or insects should be thus secretly introduced to the disturbance of the British fauna. THOS. SOUTHWELL.' (*Brit. Birds* 1: 317, 323, June 1908)

Studies of west Palearctic birds

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White Pelican



Stanley Cramp

The White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*, so ungainly on land, so superb in the air, is now one of the rarest breeding birds in the west Palearctic. It is also one of the largest; some 150 cm or more in length (with a wing-span of up to 360 cm) and weighing about 11 kg, it is a tempting target for gunners or those fishermen who regard it as a dangerous competitor. Moreover, it is exceptionally liable to desert a colony if disturbed in the early stages of nesting, and the wetland habitats which provide security and adequate food supplies have declined drastically in recent years throughout much of its northern range.

Pelicans, as a group, are unmistakable, but in flight in the western Palearctic the White Pelican may be difficult to separate, especially at a distance, from the slightly larger and rarer Dalmatian Pelican *P. crispus*, whilst the possibility of that very uncommon accidental visitor, the much smaller Pink-backed Pelican *P. rufescens*, must be borne in mind. Fortunately, the adult White Pelican has a diagnostic wing-pattern in flight, showing above only black outer primaries and coverts, and from below entirely black wing quills contrasting markedly with the white coverts. The

98. White Pelicans *Pelecanus onocrotalus*, Romania (Al Filipaşcu)





99. White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*, Kenya, June 1977 (Leif Schack-Nielsen)

underwing pattern is also marked in immatures, but indistinct in juveniles. At closer range, the White Pelican is marked by whiter plumage, black wing quills, red eyes, and a greater area of orbital skin. Separation of young birds is difficult.

White Pelicans prefer shallow, warm fresh waters, especially the larger

100. White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*, Kenya, June 1977 (Leif Schack-Nielsen)





101 & 102. White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*, Kenya, June 1977 (Leif Schack-Nielsen)





103. White Pelicans *Pelecanus onocrotalus*, Kenya, June 1977 (Leif Schack-Nielsen)

river deltas and wetlands, though less frequently they may be found on brackish or saline lagoons, estuaries or coastal waters, especially of land-locked seas. They require large amounts of fish, up to 1200g daily. They feed mainly on gregarious fish living in shallow water, catching them in their bills with the gular sac held open to form a scoop. They often fish in groups, forming a semicircle to drive the fish forward. In southeast Europe, carp *Cyprinus carpio* are their favourite food (though many other species are taken), and in Africa the main species are probably cichlids *Tilapia*. They do not defend feeding territories, although they may fish solitarily.

White Pelicans require secure, undisturbed sites for nesting. In Europe and Asia, these are usually found in open areas in the middle of large reed-beds. The colonies in the Danube Delta, now a tiny remnant of the vast numbers once breeding there, would never be found by the casual searcher; it is not easy even for the local boatmen, as it involves a tortuous journey in their narrow-pointed boats, through twisting and almost invisible channels in the 5-m-high reeds, and perhaps a final risky scramble over the *plaur*, the floating mass of decayed reeds on which the living ones grow. In Africa, the sites are more varied, ranging from arid islands in Lake Shala, Ethiopia, safe from hyenas or jackals, to the tops of almost unclimbable rocky peaks in West Africa and the flat inshore islands of the Banc d'Arguin, further west on the Atlantic coast.

In the breeding season, both sexes develop a swelling or knob on the forehead at the base of the bill, which is pinkish-yellow on the larger male and an intense orange on the female, and later both grow a small crest at the back of the head. White Pelicans have no elaborate mating displays. Groups of unmated males, either at or away from the colony, stand together or walk about, sometimes lounging with outstretched bills, grabbing each others' bills, raising bills or uttering the 'moo' call. Unmated females join the edge of such groups and are courted by one or more males; the preferred male is quickly selected and the two move on to the water, to display with other pairs. Pairs will also parade on land, the male following the female

with a striding walk, raised bill and partly opened wings. Mating usually takes place near the nest-site, without special preliminary display (for further details see Brown & Urban 1969; also Cramp & Simmons 1977).

In the Danube Delta, the nests are substantial piles of reeds, twigs and other vegetation, though in some African colonies they may nest on almost bare rock. The male brings the nesting material in his pouch, while the female builds the nest. For large birds, with such formidable beaks, the nests are built surprisingly close together, often touching, but there is little of the squabbling or fighting so frequently found in other communal ground-nesting species. The colonies are far from noisy, though the moos, grunts and growls from the massed birds produce a sort of low-pitched roar or hum. Outside the breeding season, White Pelicans are almost entirely silent, though in flight they may utter a deep, quiet croak. Normally, they lay two white oval eggs, in the latter half of April in Europe; they are single-brooded, but replacements may be laid if first eggs are lost within ten days of laying. Incubation is said to last 29-30 days in the USSR and 35-36 days in Kenya, and is shared by both sexes. The relieving bird walks through the mass of sitting pelicans in the colony, receiving many pecks on the way; on arriving at the nest, it raises its bill and utters deep grunting calls; occasionally, the pair allopreens.

For the first three days after hatching, the chick is naked, pink and helpless, requiring continuous brooding. Then the skin darkens and a chocolate-coloured down begins to grow. For the first two weeks, the young are fed on liquid regurgitated matter; barely able to raise their heads, they peck feebly at the red tip of the parent's upper mandible. The late Leslie Brown, who was responsible for so much of our knowledge of White Pelican

104. White Pelicans *Pelecanus onocrotalus*, East Africa, February 1974 (Eric Hosking)





105. White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*, Romania, September 1979 (*Jan Ševčík*)

behaviour, suggested that this red tip may be the origin of the medieval legend that pelicans fed the young with their own blood, obtained from their breasts. After the first fortnight, the young begin to feed on fish brought to them by both parents. At this stage, the young begin to leave the nests and form into groups or pods, which soon may number a hundred or more young. Parents have been seen to search for their young in these pods and later the hungry young (normally fed once a day) appear to recognise

106. White Pelicans *Pelecanus onocrotalus*, USSR, June (*E. Bragin*)



their parents and chase them eagerly when they arrive with fish. After about eight weeks the young, now feathered, begin to swim and make attempts at fishing. They are then almost as large as their parents and feeding is a strenuous process; the young bird places its head inside the mouth of the adult, and then, unable to see, often drags the parent violently around in its efforts to obtain food. At about ten weeks, the young learn to fly and then apparently become independent.

White Pelicans breeding in the northern parts of their range are migratory, though, in the absence of ringing, remarkably little is known of the precise nature of their movements. Few remain in the Balkans or Turkey; most probably winter in Egypt and along the Red Sea, while some may possibly continue farther south where their presence would be masked by the resident (or perhaps partly dispersive) African birds. Most of those breeding in Asia also move south, presumably to Iraq, southern Iran, Pakistan and India. Like storks *Ciconia*, they not infrequently migrate by soaring in thermals, though more usually they fly direct in V-shaped formations at high altitudes. They are rarely seen on the islands of the eastern Mediterranean and it seems that they mainly avoid long sea-crossings. Those nesting in the Danube Delta depart from September to

107. Nestling White Pelicans *Pelecanus onocrotalus*, Romania (V. Lușcaviu)





108. White Pelicans *Pelecanus onocrotalus*, Bulgaria, June 1960 (Eric Hosking)

early November, returning in late March or April, both movements being later than in the case of the Dalmatian Pelican. Non-breeding flocks have been recorded in summer in the Balkans, Iraq and Iran; they probably do not breed until three or four years old.

109. White Pelicans *Pelecanus onocrotalus*, Romania (Al Filipaşcu)



The White Pelican, unlike the Dalmatian Pelican (Crivelli & Vizi 1981), is not endangered on a world scale, for the large southern populations, mainly in Africa, seem reasonably secure at the present time, although threats to the limited number of safe breeding sites could easily arise. All the northern populations, in Europe and Asia, are now seriously threatened. White Pelicans ceased to nest in Hungary in 1858, in Yugoslavia in about 1940 and in Bulgaria in 1932. In Greece, they were first found breeding at Lake Mikra Prespa in 1968; there were up to 45 pairs in 1969; then, after the area was declared a National Park, some 150-180 pairs in 1971. From then on until 1979, numbers tended to be lower in most years (Crivelli 1980), though there were about 210 pairs in 1981, but wardening seems far from adequate, and disturbance by fishermen, tourists and birdwatchers is an ever-present risk (G. Müller *in litt.*). Romania used to be the stronghold of the White Pelican in Europe; at the end of the 19th century they nested inland along the Danube as far as Calarasi, and reports in 1867 spoke of 'millions' of White and Dalmatian Pelicans. By 1925, both species were confined to the Danube Delta and numbered only a few hundred pairs. Their doom seemed certain. Then protective measures were introduced, and these have been greatly strengthened since 1950. Special reserves have been created which can be changed quickly, if, as not infrequently happens, the colonies change; regulations have been introduced to ensure that the large-scale cutting of reeds for cellulose, now a major industry, does not harm the pelicans, and educational programmes have been undertaken to convince the fishermen that the birds are not a menace to their interests. The pelicans have survived, but, although precise figures are hard to obtain, numbers probably decreased, with perhaps 5,000 pairs of White Pelicans in 1961, fluctuating between 1,000 and 1,700 pairs during 1964-71. In 1980, some 5,000 young were seen (A. J. Crivelli *in litt.*), which suggests

110. White Pelicans *Pelecanus onocrotalus*, Romania (Al Filipaşcu)



some recent increase. In the USSR, information is largely lacking, but many colonies have been abandoned and it is now included in the *Red Data Book of USSR* (Bannikov 1978) as rare and decreasing; in Europe, there seems to be only one colony remaining along the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov and it may no longer nest on the shores of the Caspian Sea, while most Asiatic colonies have declined or disappeared. The present USSR population is unknown, but A. J. Crivelli (*in litt.*) has tentatively estimated that it may now be as low as 5,000-10,000 pairs.

Acknowledgments

This paper is based largely on the information in Cramp & Simmons (1977) and I am grateful to all the Editors concerned. More recent information on population trends has been supplied by Dr A. J. Crivelli and G. Müller, and I should like to thank them for their generous assistance.

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Best recent black-and-white bird-photographs

We had a large and varied selection of black-and-white photographs from which to choose this year's selection: in spite of the attractions of colour, bird photography in black-and-white is alive and well! We are grateful for this, since the expense of colour reproduction is such that for journals such as ours black-and-white photographs are, and will remain, the staple form of illustration.

This year we are showing 14 photographs, the work of ten photographers, four of whom have two pictures included (Keith Atkin, Tony Bond, Harold Grenfell and Martin Withers). Hans Schouten, whose work has appeared previously in *BB*, is, however, included in this feature for the first time.

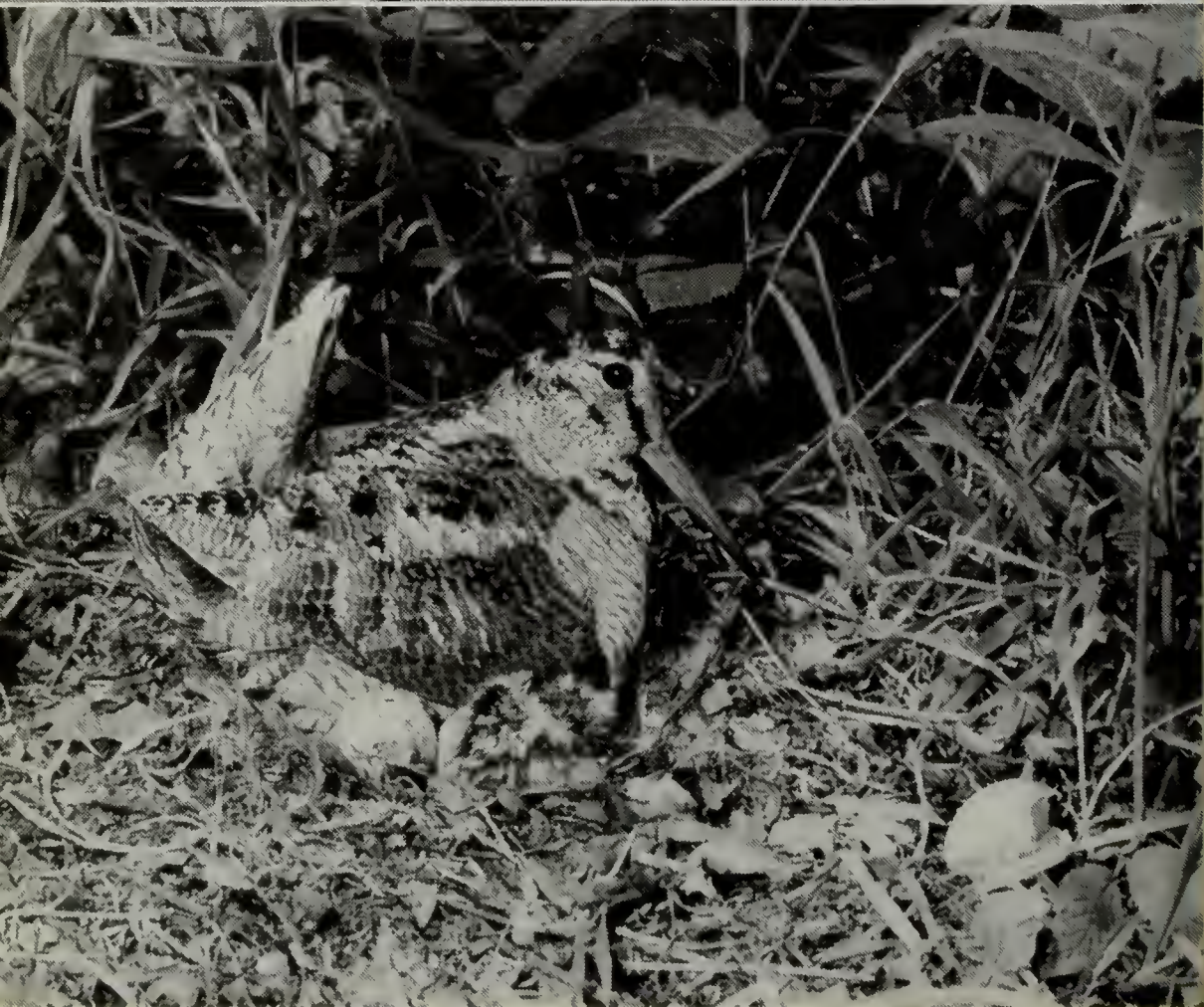
E. A. Janes, who has had four photographs selected in each of the last two years, has provided a very original shot of a Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus* on its nest. A wide-angle lens has been used to good effect to show both the bird and its characteristically placed, untidily 'decorated' nest in a suburban Hertfordshire setting.

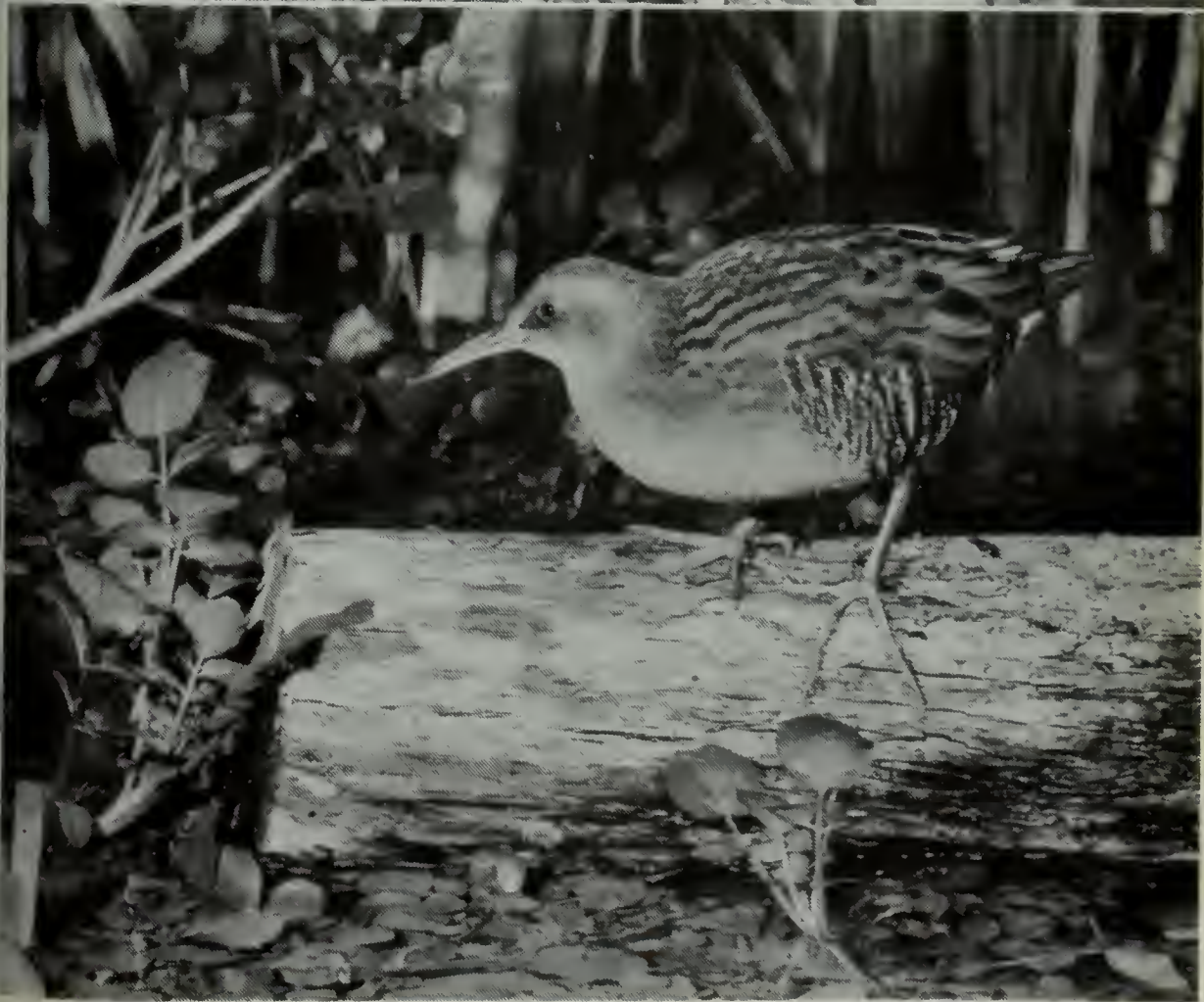
Hans Schouten has produced a wonderful portrait of a Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus* at a natural drinking pool. The photograph—the first of



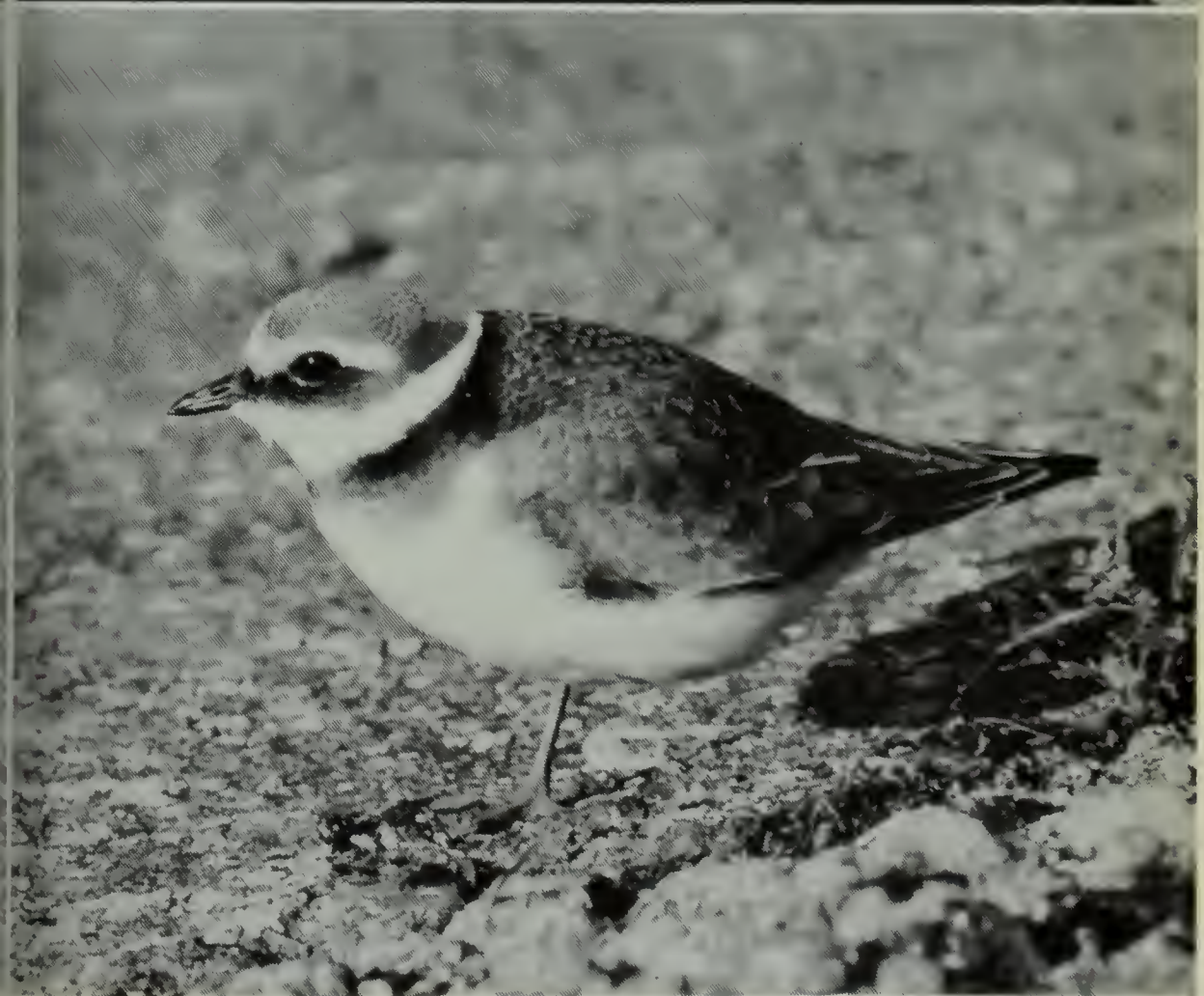














- 111 & 112.** Top, Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus* brooding young, Hertfordshire, April 1982 (E. A. Janes); bottom, Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus* drinking, Netherlands, February 1983 (Hans Schouten)
- 113.** Male Great Tit *Parus major* feeding young in natural site, Greater Manchester, May 1981 (Anthony J. Bond)
- 114.** Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* with eggs, Argyll, June 1982 (Martin B. Withers)
- 115 & 116.** Top, Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*, Lincolnshire, June 1982 (Ed Mackrill); bottom, Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* returning to newly hatched chick after removing eggshell, Lancashire, June 1979 (Dennis Green)
- 117 & 118.** Top, Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor* feeding nestlings, Portugal, June 1982 (Kevin Carlson); bottom, Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*, Warwickshire, November 1982 (Martin B. Withers)
- 119 & 120.** Top, Teals *Anas crecca*, West Glamorgan, March 1982 (Harold E. Grenfell); bottom, Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica*, Lincolnshire, July 1982 (Keith Atkin)
- 121 & 122.** Top, Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*, West Glamorgan, August 1982 (Harold E. Grenfell); bottom, juvenile Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*, Lincolnshire, September 1982 (Keith Atkin)
- 123 & 124.** Top, Jay *Garrulus glandarius*, Warwickshire, March 1980 (M. C. Wilkes); bottom, two Jays, Cheshire, June 1981 (Anthony J. Bond)

this species in this series—shows well the character of this bird, with its massive bill. Those lucky enough to have encountered this species in Britain must have longed for a photograph of this quality to present to the Rarities Committee!

Tony Bond's photographs appear for the fifth consecutive year: a fine achievement. The first of this year's two is an attractive shot of a Great Tit *Parus major* feeding young in its nest hole, noteworthy in that, unlike many photos of this type, it has been taken within a natural nest hole. Another nest shot, this by Martin Withers, is an attractive, well-composed picture of a Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* at a nest with eggs, neatly framed by just the right amount of foreground.

This is the second consecutive year in which Ed Mackrill has had a photograph featured. The Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*, in typical alert pose, is about to dash off after the next passing insect. Dennis Green, featured here for the tenth year, has provided us with the delightful Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* engrossed with its currently hatching eggs, the acorns and the oak leaves testifying to its woodland site.

Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor* is another species that has not previously been featured. This photograph was taken in Portugal by Dr Kevin Carlson (the thirteenth year his work has been featured), who has overcome the problems of a shaded nest-site with skilful use of 'fill-in' flash, to show the bird feeding a grasshopper to its young.

The second of Martin Withers's photographs is of a Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*, its perch on a semi-floating log allowing us to see its proportionately large feet, the watercress emphasising the relative small size of the bird.

Our only flight shot this year is Harold Grenfell's evocative picture of a flock of Teals *Anas crecca* coming in to land at a reed-fringed pool. We were

attracted to this picture by the sharp focus of virtually all the birds, a difficult feat to achieve in view of the need to use a wide lens-aperture, with corresponding shallow depth of field, so that a high shutter speed can freeze wing motion.

The Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica*—the third species that has not previously been featured—has been admirably photographed by Keith Atkin, who stalked the bird with the aid of the reservoir wall.

The second photographs by the two preceding photographers that we publish this year are both waders and both birds in their first autumn: an alert Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* on rocks by the sea-shore, and a Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* keeping a low profile in a gale, again, like the diver, stalked from behind a reservoir wall.

We seem to have created something of a record with the number of Jays *Garrulus glandarius* that we have selected in the last three or four years: this year we have chosen two. The one by Mike Wilkes is carrying an acorn (and no doubt has others in its throat): a fine shot of this often-observed but not often-photographed feature of the species' behaviour. Nor could we resist Tony Bond's amusing photograph of two Jays, the attitude and position of one almost exactly mirroring that of the other.

May we again invite bird-photographers to submit a selection of their best photographs for next year's feature (closing date 31st January 1984), and at the same time remind nest-photographers of the requirements of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981). Entrants for the competition may like to note our philosophy of print selection for this feature, and the general requirements for the publication of black-and-white prints, which we have stated recently (*Brit. Birds* 75: 411, 426-428).

R. J. CHANDLER, ERIC HOSKING, J. T. R. SHARROCK
and D. A. SMITH

European news

Records have been supplied by correspondents in 18 countries for this thirteenth six-monthly report on interesting occurrences and status changes in Europe. This feature is intended as a news service; anyone requiring further information or quoting records in other publications should refer to the literature of the relevant country. Records awaiting formal verification by national rarity committees are indicated by an asterisk(*).

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*
FAEROE ISLANDS Second record: 20th February 1983.

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*
NETHERLANDS Fourth record: Scheveningen on 7th August 1981.

Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* CZECHOSLOVAKIA First breeding since 1960s: about 30 pairs at new reservoir in southern Moravia in 1982.

Western Reef Heron *Egretta gularis* FRANCE Dark morph in Alsace during 29th August to 1st September 1982*, and white morph in Charente-Maritime during 10th-12th September 1982*. SWITZERLAND Four records: Arbon on 25th August 1982*; Chevroux on 4th and 17th September 1982*; Rhine delta, dark phase on 5th October 1982* and light phase on 16th October 1982*; all regarded as probably escapes.

Great White Egret *Egretta alba* HUNGARY About 330 wintered from September 1981 to January 1982 in northwestern Transdanubia.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* BELGIUM Increase: 1,309 nests at 34 sites in 1981, compared with only 178 nests in 1966 (cf. increase in France, *Brit. Birds* 75: 569).

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* DENMARK Decrease: 20 breeding pairs in 1982 (25 in 1981). NETHERLANDS Of six breeding pairs in 1982, rearing ten young, five were mixed wild × reared and one a truly wild pair.

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber* LITHUANIAN SSR Second record: spring 1982.

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor* AUSTRIA More widespread than anticipated before atlas fieldwork: found even on small ponds in Alpine foothills. CZECHOSLOVAKIA Greatly increasing: 300-350 breeding pairs in 1982, total population about 5,500 individuals (first breeding in 1948). MALTA Third 20th Century record: two together in December 1982 (previously in 1926 and 1978).

Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis* ESTONIAN SSR Second breeding record: in 1982, pair laid six eggs and fledged six young at same site as in 1981 (cf. *Brit. Birds* 75: 569).

Teal *Anas crecca* FRANCE First record of Nearctic race *carolinensis*: male in Maine-et-Loire on 28th March 1982*.

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors* BELGIUM Second record: male (accompanied by female, probably also this species) at Zingem on 31st March 1982. FRANCE Twelfth record: near Brest in spring 1982*.

Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina* MALTA Tenth and eleventh records: two singles in November 1982.

Eider *Somateria mollissima* BULGARIA First winter record: female near Burgas on 19th January 1983.

Steller's Eider *Polysticta stelleri* NETHERLANDS Adult male at Terschelling in summer 1980, and in Friesland in spring 1981 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 26) and in spring 1982: probably same individual.

Harlequin Duck *Histrionicus histrionicus* NETHERLANDS First record: female at IJmuiden from 28th December 1982 until at least January 1983*, but perhaps an escape.

Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis* FINLAND Highest-ever total at one place: 250,000 migrating WSW at Söderskär, Gulf of Finland, on 8th October 1982.

Barrow's Goldeneye *Bucephala islandica*

FAEROE ISLANDS Male at Kirkjuböur from November 1982 to at least 21st February 1983.

White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* BULGARIA Unusually high wintering numbers: 19 on Brugaskoto Lake on 19th January 1983; 214 on Durankulashkoto Lake on 21st January 1983. FRANCE Male near Perpignan during June 1982*. SPAIN Increase following control of illegal hunting at Laguna de Zóñar, Córdoba, shown by winter counts during 1978/79-1981/82: 23, 41, 52 and 65 individuals.

Black Vulture *Aegypius monachus* POLAND First record since 1949: juvenile caught in Kielce in mid August 1982.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* DENMARK Continued increase: 420-440 breeding pairs in 1982.

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* POLAND First to third winter records: adult female in Bialystok on 26th December 1978, adult male near Elblag on 27th January 1981, and adult male in Opole on 5th December 1981.

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* FINLAND High numbers: 5,200 migrants at Hanko bird-station in autumn 1982 (double normal numbers).

Buzzard *Buteo buteo* DENMARK *Correction*: large passage of 31,285 at Stigsnaes, Zealand (*Brit. Birds* 75: 570), was in autumn 1980, not 1981 (25,147 in 1981 and 24,204 in 1982).

Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus* BULGARIA Unusually high winter numbers in Strandza Mountains: six between Golyamo Krushevo and Topolovgrad on 21st January 1983.

Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus* FINLAND Highest-ever numbers: 4,000 migrating southeast in southeast Finland in five days in early October 1982.

Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga* FRANCE Small influx in northwest in autumn 1982: in Côtes-du-Nord in September*, in Morbihan in November*, and two in Baie de Somme during 25th November to 3rd December.

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* HUNGARY Only two recent records in eastern Hungary, both in mid 1970s: male near Konyár on 28th September 1974 and male in Hortobágy on 5th October 1976.

Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonora* POLAND First record: adult in Leszo on 12th September 1982.

Crane *Grus grus* BELGIUM Very high numbers

during autumn migration 1982, with several thousands even in the west, especially noticeable on 6th November 1982. **FINLAND** High numbers: 15,500 migrants on south coast in spring 1982 (11,000 near Helsinki, where previous maximum 6,000). **FRANCE** Very large movement: up to 1,500 in north Vendée, and thousands flying west or south in Normandy, Brittany, Champagne, Vendée, Charente-Maritime, etc., from 6th to 14th November 1982.

Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* **POLAND** First inland breeding: nest on River Vistula in Lublin on 24th June 1982.:

Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni* **FRANCE** Fifth record: adult in Marne on 11th November 1982*.

Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus* **FRANCE** Second record: in Brittany on 9th September 1982*.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* **FRANCE** Breeding population stable or perhaps locally increasing: 900-950 pairs in 1982.

Caspian Plover *Charadrius asiaticus* **MALTA** Seventh record: one in August 1982. **ROMANIA** Istria Lake on 25th May 1979. (Cf. records in Norway in June 1978 and France in August 1980, *Brit. Birds* 72: 591; 74: 261.)

Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus* **FRANCE** First nesting in Pyrénées: at least one pair bred in spring 1982.

Sociable Plover *Chettusia gregaria* **FRANCE** Ninth record: adult summer in Dordogne during 19th-25th March 1982*.

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis* **DENMARK** Third record: Zealand during 19th-22nd August 1982* (first and second were both in 1978, *Brit. Birds* 72: 277).

Dunlin *Calidris alpina* **BELGIUM** First breeding record: two young reared near Anvers in 1982.

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* **DENMARK** More than usual: maximum five at Ølsemagle, Zealand, in autumn 1982.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis* **MALTA** Third record: one in April 1982. **POLAND** First wintering: Nysa Reservoir, Silesia, from early November 1982 to 3rd February 1983.

Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* **ROMANIA** Range expansion: breeding in 1957, now extending in northwest (Bihor and Satu Mare).

Great Snipe *Gallinago media* **DENMARK** More than usual: at least six in August 1982 (usually only one or two).

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* **FINLAND** Record of 15th May 1980 (*Brit. Birds* 73: 575) accepted as dowitcher *L. scolopaceus/L. griseus*.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* **BELGIUM** Small influx: at least nine at Antwerpen in July-August 1982. **ESTONIAN SSR** Third record: near Tartu in early June 1982 (first two in 1949). **POLAND** Small influx: several singles between late July and early October 1982.

Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus* **DENMARK** High numbers: at least 186 in autumn 1982 (3-4 times as many as in last good year, 1976).

Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus* **DENMARK** Record numbers: total of about 24 at Skagen, North Jutland, in autumn 1982*.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus* **POLAND** First and second breeding records: nest east of Gdańsk in June 1981, three nests and fourth breeding pair on River Vistula near Płock in June 1982.

Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini* **POLAND** Second inland record: two immatures on Nysa Reservoir, Silesia, on 29th September 1982 (first was in December 1981, *Brit. Birds* 75: 571).

Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides* **FINLAND** Second and third* records: first-years in Kotka and Helsinki in November-December 1982. (Only previous acceptable record, following review: Helsinki in February 1964.)

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus* **POLAND** Previously extremely rare inland, but since winter 1977/78 has penetrated Vistula even above Warsaw in flocks of up to 36 in November-February.

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea* **BELGIUM** Second breeding record: Zwin reserve in 1982 (first was in 1976, *Brit. Birds* 72: 278).

Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius* **NETHERLANDS** Tenth record: in Friesland on 28th August 1982.

Pygmy Owl *Glaucidium passerinum* **SWITZERLAND** Pair at Cimalmotto on 29th September 1982 (exceptional for Tessin).

Alpine Swift *Apus melba* **ROMANIA** Range expansion: breeding in 1966, now extending in southwest and west.

Little Swift *Apus affinis* **SPAIN** Guadalhorece River, Malaga, on 30th January and 16th February 1982.

Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* **FRANCE** Nesting in north and northwest: in 1981, one pair bred in Pas-de-Calais; in 1982, in north Brittany,

success unknown (different site from 1981, *Brit. Birds* 75: 28); also in 1982, about 15 pairs in Parisian Region.

Roller *Coracias garrulus* NETHERLANDS Small influx: seven during May-June 1982 (only one or two annually since eight in 1971).

Syrian Woodpecker *Dendrocopos syriacus* AUSTRIA Westwards expansion: pair bred in city garden in Linz, Upper Austria, in 1982 (100 km west of nearest other site) (cf. first breeding in Poland in 1978 and westerly expansion in Czechoslovakia, *Brit. Birds* 71: 585; 73: 576; 74: 261-262).

Bar-tailed Desert Lark *Ammomanes cincturus* MALTA Seventh record: one in May 1982.

Woodlark *Lullula arborea* DENMARK Comments (*Brit. Birds* 75: 572) referred only to Zealand. Highest migrant number for years: 236 at Kongelunden, Copenhagen, on 9th October 1982.

Shore Lark *Eremophila alpestris* ROMANIA Expanding range in recent decades.

Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* ROMANIA First record: Băile Herculane during 24th-27th August 1968; presence also confirmed later. SWITZERLAND *Correction*: 1980 breeding referred to this species, not *P. fuligula* (*Brit. Birds* 73: 576).

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* BELGIUM First record: found dead near Liège on 27th May 1982*. NETHERLANDS Fourth record: in Utrecht on 12th-13th April 1982 (1981 record noted in *Brit. Birds* 75: 28 was not accepted). POLAND First record: two in Przemyśl on 9th May 1982. ROMANIA Range expansion: breeding confirmed in 1976, now extending in southwest.

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris* AUSTRIA No breeding records in 1982: 'More and more suitable habitats in Lower Austria and Northern Burgenland are planted with vineyards.'

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* LITHUANIAN SSR First record: male in June 1982 (cf. records in June 1982 in Sweden and in July 1982 in Finland, *Brit. Birds* 75: 572).

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica* SPAIN Sparse population discovered on southern slopes of Cantabrian Mountains, in Palencia and León, with breeding birds at 14 localities between 1,000 and 1,600 m in heathland and scrub.

Moussier's Redstart *Phoenicurus moussieri* MALTA Seventh record: three together in April 1982.

Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* FRANCE Fourth

record of one of eastern races: Ushant on 1st October 1982*, probably *S. t. maura*.

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* FINLAND Third record: first-winter male in Hanko during 14th-16th October 1982 (previous records were in October 1979 and October 1981, *Brit. Birds* 73: 259; 75: 270). HUNGARY Singing male near Keszthely on 6th June 1982.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris* AUSTRIA Range extension: pair bred in 1982 in Prater Park, Vienna (150 km from nearest other site) (cf. summary in *Brit. Birds* 71: 585).

Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* FRANCE First record: near Paris on 29th August 1982*.

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* ESTONIAN SSR First record away from Matsalu Bay area colonised in 1977: adult female in Pärnu on 2nd August 1982 (cf. increase in Sweden and colonisation of Latvian SSR, *Brit. Birds* 73: 577).

Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon* SWITZERLAND Rottenschwil during 28th September to 1st October 1982*; Lake Klingnau on 21st October 1982*.

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola* ROMANIA Breeding confirmed in 1952 and, since 1975, many instances of breeding in Danube Delta.

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* POLAND A few singing males near Kętrzyn in June in 1981 and 1982.

Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* NETHERLANDS First record: Terschelling on 2nd-3rd October 1982 (cf. first records for Norway, Finland and France in October 1978, June 1981 and October 1981, *Brit. Birds* 73: 260; 75: 29, 271).

Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans* NETHERLANDS Sixth record: male at Engelsmanplaat on 6th June 1982 (fifth was in October 1977).

Rüppell's Warbler *Sylvia rueppelli* FRANCE Second record: female at Barcaggio, Corsica, on 7th April 1982* (first was in Var estuary on 20th March 1970).

Pallas's Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus* DENMARK Largest-ever influx: about 16 during 9th-22nd October 1982* (19 previously). ESTONIAN SSR Sixth to eighth records: Saaremaa Island on 11th October 1982 and 17th October 1982, and in Pärnu on 15th October 1982. FINLAND Highest-ever numbers: 45 (23 caught) in autumn 1982; total now over 150, including 22 in 1981. LITHUANIAN SSR Surprisingly, none trapped in autumn 1982.

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* ESTONIAN SSR Twelfth record: in Pärnu on 20th September 1982. FINLAND Normal numbers (cf. Pallas's Warbler): about five in autumn 1982; total now about 100, including 17 in 1981. LITHUANIAN SSR Autumn 1982: two.

Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi* DENMARK Third record: Christiansø in autumn 1982*. FINLAND Fifth to seventh records: Lågskär bird-station on 30th September 1982 and 5th October 1982, and Tankar bird-station, Gulf of Bothnia, during 5th-11th October.

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus* BELGIUM Second record: Heist from 30th October to 6th November 1982 (first was in October 1979).

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus* LITHUANIAN SSR One trapped at Pepe in autumn 1982, the eleventh (compared with 73,000 Goldcrests) during 1966-82.

Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus* DENMARK Probably now extinct as breeding bird after three severe winters 1978/79-1980/81.

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* FRANCE First record: female on Ushant on 27th September 1982* (cf. first and second Finnish records and first Polish record in May 1980, October 1980 and September 1981, *Brit. Birds* 73: 578; 75: 29, 573).

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor* ESTONIAN SSR Eleventh record: in Haapsalu on 22nd May 1982.

Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor* DENMARK Many in autumn 1982 (first good influx since mid 1970s).

Masked Shrike *Lanius nubicus* FINLAND First record: first-winter at Lågskär bird-station on 23rd October 1982.

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* SPAIN Southerly expansion continues: nest near River Ebro, Logroño, Rioja, overlapping with dense population of Spotless Starling *S. unicolor*.

Rose-coloured Starling *Sturnus roseus* POLAND First and second records since Second World War: juveniles in Poznań on 26th July 1982 and in Leszno on 19th August 1982.

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis* ROMANIA Range expansion: nested in Agigea in 1964, now breeding almost to south of Romania.

Snowfinch *Montifringilla nivalis* ROMANIA Sachalin Island on 28th March 1970.

Citril Finch *Serinus citrinella* YUGOSLAVIA First confirmed breeding: nest with young at Mojstrana in June 1981.

Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus* DENMARK Heaviest irruption for years: over 100 seen in two localities in autumn 1982; two or three breeding records in January 1983 (previous total of only ten breeding records). NETHERLANDS Large invasion: at least 100 and probably over 200, especially in coastal area, from late September 1982 onwards; rumours of breeding near Haarlem (only eight previous records, the last in 1972).

Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus* DENMARK First record: Christiansø during 22nd June to 3rd July 1982*.

Scarlet Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* DENMARK Continuing increase: eight to ten breeding pairs at Skagen, North Jutland, and single pairs at Hvide Sande, West Jutland, and on Christiansø (cf. range expansions in Austria, Belgium, France, German Federal Republic, Switzerland, Yugoslavia and elsewhere, *Brit. Birds* 75: 573; 76: 118-123).

Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana* AUSTRIA Massive decrease: in 1982, found breeding at only one site in northeastern Lower Austria, where widespread in 1960s (cf. decrease in central Europe and Norway, *Brit. Birds* 72: 280; 76: 118-123).

Yellow-browed Bunting *Emberiza chrysophrys* NETHERLANDS First record: trapped at Schiermonnikoog on 19th October 1982.

Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica* ESTONIAN SSR Seventh and eighth records: in Viljandi on 4th August 1982 and 18th August 1982. NETHERLANDS Correction: records (*Brit. Birds* 75: 30) referred to 1980, not 1981.

Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala* ROMANIA Range expansion: first in south Dobrogea in 1967, now extending throughout that region.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Pheucticus ludovicianus* SPAIN First record: first-winter at Benidorm, Alicante, on 17th October 1982.

Yellow-headed Blackbird *Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus* FRANCE First record: Baie de Somme during 23rd August to 15th September 1979, but possibly escape (cf. first Norwegian record on 30th May 1979, *Brit. Birds* 73: 260).

Correspondents

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No information was supplied from Albania, German Democratic Republic, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Luxemburg, Norway, Portugal or Sweden. Information from the Federal German Republic was received too late for inclusion, but will appear in the next 'European news'.

Mystery photographs

78 It could be argued that we in Britain and Ireland are lucky in having only two 'Accipiters' to worry about: Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* and Goshawk *A. gentilis*. Even so, because of the excitement that can be created by a large female Sparrowhawk, just two species can still cause headaches for county bird recorders. As one goes east or south, the problem grows as the number of species of *Accipiter* increases. Once one reaches eastern Asia or central Africa, notebooks seem unfortunately (but wisely) to contain a high number of records of 'Accipiter sp.'.

Last month's bird (plates 91 & 125) was photographed at the Bosphorus, Turkey, in September. Its smallish size, relatively slim breast, and heavy barring rule out Goshawk; in the field, so too would its quick wing-beats. One is left, therefore, with the choice, because of geographical range, between Sparrowhawk and Levant Sparrowhawk *A. brevipes*. It is in fact the latter.

Juvenile and female Sparrowhawks and Levant Sparrowhawks can be very difficult to identify, but a photograph can help considerably. If the first primary could be seen, the bird here would show the four 'free' primaries of Levant (compared to the five of Sparrowhawk), and the fact that the 3rd and 4th primaries are the longest (the 4th and 5th are the longest on Sparrowhawk). The effect of this is a narrower and more pointed, falcon-



125. Juvenile Levant Sparrowhawk *Accipiter brevipes*, Turkey, September 1967 (*Richard Porter*)
like wing on Levant. Also, if studied carefully, the tail can be seen to have six (possibly seven) bars; whereas on Sparrowhawk there would be four or five. The bird is a juvenile, hence the well-barred underwing and the chequered and barred underparts, though this particular individual is perhaps more barred and less chequered below than usual. Because of the angle of the photograph, the dark line down the centre of the throat (which also separates young Levant from Sparrowhawk) cannot be seen.



126. Above, male Shikra *Accipiter badius*, Iran, May 1977 (*R. F. Porter*)



127. Right, Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*, Czechoslovakia, August 1974 (*Kovář Karel*)

Male Levants, with their almost white underparts and black wing tips, are easy to identify, but great care must be taken over females and juveniles: although they usually show dark wing tips, this is sometimes difficult to observe. On migration, of course, identification is aided by the fact that the Levant frequently occurs in tight, often large flocks, whereas the Sparrowhawk is usually seen singly.

The other small *Accipiter* which has occurred in the Western Palearctic is the Shikra *A. badius*. This species does not need to be seriously considered except in southern Asia or in Africa south of the Sahara. Typically, it is slightly smaller than Levant, with slightly shorter wings, which are

rounded, not unlike those of Sparrowhawk. The juvenile is very similar in plumage to the juvenile Levant, though the markings below tend to be less bold and there are five (or rarely six) bars on the tail. RICHARD PORTER



128. Mystery photograph 79. Identify this species seen in September. Answer next month

Notes



Crossbills using oak as 'feeding tree' During late March and early April 1980, in West Blean Woods, Kent, up to 20 Crossbills *Loxia curvirostra* fed regularly in a small plantation of mature Scots pines *Pinus sylvestris*. After detaching the pine cones, they flew 20-100m to a nearby pedunculate oak *Quercus robur*, where they proceeded to feed. By 7th April, there were over 500 'crossbilled' cones beneath this feeding tree.

CHRIS HINDLE

42 Glenbervie Drive, Herne Bay, Kent

Dr Alan Knox has commented as follows: 'Feeding crossbills routinely have favourite feeding perches to which they carry cones to work on them, but these perches tend to be in the cone tree itself and typically not more than a few metres from the source of the cones. They will, however, often take cones to a neighbouring tree, particularly if they were originally taking cones from it before starting on the current one. Carrying cones 20m is not too unusual, but repeatedly carrying them 100m certainly is, especially considering the extra work involved (Crossbills weigh about 40g, while cones can weigh 15-20g). The Crossbills were obviously not taking all the cones to the oak, since a total of 500 would be very rapidly amassed by a flock of 20 (only 25 cones per individual).' Eds

Black-and-white Warbler in Devon At about 14.20 GMT on 3rd March 1978, at my home then in Whitechurch, Tavistock, Devon, I was standing at my kitchen window which looked out onto a lower roof outside. Suddenly a small bird of a type I had never seen before alighted in front of me about 2 m away. It was there for about five minutes, and at one time came closer than 1 m from my window.

Its appearance amazed me. The head pattern was most distinct, being black-and-white striped; the breast and underparts were white, with very distinctive black dashes, and the rest of it was also black-and-white stripes. I described it to myself as about the size of a wagtail *Motacilla* without a tail, with head colouring like a badger *Meles meles*, breast like a Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus* (but in black-and-white) and with black-and-white stripes lengthways down its back and sides. In its movements I thought it like a Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*—or even a mouse *Mus*! It flew off into a fir tree and I never saw it again. On looking through *Birds of Britain and Europe* by Heinzel, Fitter & Parslow, I came to the conclusion that it must have been a Black-and-white Warbler *Mniotilta varia* from North America, and I have since learned that this was the fifth record for Britain and Ireland.

IRIS MCEWAN

Cherrytree Cottage, Station Road, Horrabridge, Devon

Although initially incredulous, the members of the Rarities Committee admired Mrs McEwan's evocative, succinct and unmistakable description of this striking species. Eds

Diary dates

This list covers events taking place during July 1983 to June 1984. We welcome submission of details for possible inclusion in the next list, covering January to December 1984.

5th July BRITISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB. Paul Goriup on 'Bustards'. Central London. Non-members should write (enclosing SAE) at least two weeks before to Hon. Secretary, R. E. F. Peal, 2 Chestnut Lane, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 3AR.

16th-27th July SOCIETY OF WILDLIFE ARTISTS' ANNUAL EXHIBITION (including display of winning entries in 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' and 'The Richard Richardson Award' competitions). The Mall Galleries, The Mall, London SW1. Open 10-5 Mon.-Fri.; 10-1 Sat. Admission 50p (free to SWLA members).

5th-9th September INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON BIRD CENSUS AND ATLAS STUDIES. Newland Park College, Chalfont St Giles, Buckinghamshire. Details from R. J. Fuller, BTO, Beech Grove, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 5NR.

20th-22nd September RSPB CONFERENCE.

'The impact of habitat change on bird populations.' University of East Anglia. Details from RSPB Conference Organiser, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

23rd-28th September INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR BIRD PRESERVATION (EUROPEAN CONTINENTAL SECTION) CONFERENCE. France.

8th October RSPB LONDON DAY & AGM. Cunard International Hotel, Hammersmith. Details from RSPB Conference Organiser.

8th October (provisional) RSPB SCOTTISH MEMBERS' DAY. Details from RSPB Conference Organiser.

1st November BRITISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION AUTUMN SCIENTIFIC MEETING. British Museum (Natural History), London SW7. 6.30-9.30 p.m. M. E. Moser on his work on herons and egrets in the Camargue. Applications to Meetings Secretary, BOU, c/o Zoological Society of London, Regent's Park, London NW1 4RY.

4th-6th November SCOTTISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB ANNUAL CONFERENCE & AGM. Marine Hotel, North Berwick. Applications to Club Secretary, SOC, 21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5BT.

2nd-4th December BTO ANNUAL CONFERENCE & AGM. Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire. Applications to BTO, Beech Grove, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 5NR.

2nd-4th December NATIONAL EXHIBITION OF CAGE AND AVIARY BIRDS. Bingley Hall, Birmingham. Details from Philip Read, Editor, 'Cage and Aviary Birds', Surrey House, 1 Throwley Way, Sutton, Surrey SM1 1QQ.

6th-8th January BTO RINGING AND MIGRATION CONFERENCE. Swanwick. Applications to BTO.

10th January BOC. M. K. Swales on 'The Denstone College Expedition to Inaccessible Island'. Central London. Information from Hon. Sec.

31st January Closing date for entries for 'Bird Photograph of the Year'.

31st January Closing date for entries for 'Best recent black-and-white bird-photographs'.

17th-19th February BTO SPRING CONFERENCE. 'Birds of Prey'. Swanwick. Applications to BTO.

13th March-8th May YOUNG ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB MIGRATION PHONE-IN. Telephone Sandy (0767) 80551. Tuesdays only, 5 p.m.-7.30 p.m. Records from adults welcomed.

14th March Closing date for entries for 'Bird Illustrator of the Year'.

6th-8th April RSPB MEMBERS' WEEKEND. University of York. Details from RSPB Conference Organiser.

6th-8th April BOU ANNUAL CONFERENCE. Cardiff University. 'Foraging strategies.' Applications to Meetings Secretary, BOU.

7th May YOC NATIONAL SPONSORED BIRD-WATCH.

Mrs Sheila D. Cobban, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3XJ

Announcements

New European 'Peterson' Ever since its first appearance in 1954, *A Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe*, by Roger Tory Peterson, Guy Mountfort and P. A. D. Hollom, has been regarded as the most reliable and thorough field guide to European birds. A completely new version is due for publication by Collins on 30th August 1983. As well as a revised text, the illustrations are now all in colour, with new paintings by Roger Tory Peterson. Every serious birdwatcher will undoubtedly wish to own a copy. The cost is £7.95, and *British Birds* subscribers in the UK and Eire can obtain it post free through British BirdShop (see page vii). Copies ordered now will be despatched by Collins on or before publication day.

'Best Days of Birdwatching' A new book is being compiled for publication by Croom Helm, with chapters by a score or so of well-known birders and *British Birds* personalities each describing his or her most memorable day's birdwatching. The authors—who include such familiar names as Bryan Bland, Robert Gillmor, Peter Grant and Bill Oddie—have agreed to waive their royalties in favour of *British Birds*, so the book will, in due course, help to add extra pages to *BB*.

The publishers, Croom Helm, are offering a prize of any five of their bird books for the most interesting, readable chapter (1,500-2,000 words) submitted by a *BB* subscriber who has not already been invited to contribute. Illustrative drawings and photographs are welcomed. Entries will be judged by Stuart Winter (the book's editor), Jo Hemmings and Bernard

Mercer (Croom Helm), P. J. Grant and Dr J. T. R. Sharrock (*British Birds*). The winning chapter will be included in the book. Why not write up your best day's birding?—you could get yourself into print, and win the prize! Entries (in *BB* style, as described on the inside front cover) should be sent, to arrive before 15th August 1983, to Stuart Winter, c/o Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

Request

Birds in Corbett National Park, India Anyone with bird records for Corbett National Park, Ramnagar (Nainital), India, is requested to send these to assist in the compilation of a checklist of the birds of the area. Details should be sent to Sri C. B. Singh, Field Director, Project Tiger, Corbett National Park, Ramnagar (Nainital) U.P., India.

News and comment

Mike Everett and Robin Prytherch

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

All-Ireland Conference The New University of Ulster at Coleraine was used for the first time as the venue for the All-Ireland Conference on Bird Conservation during 25th-27th March. Organised by the RSPB in conjunction with the Irish Wildbird Conservancy, this was the 17th in the series, the venue alternating between Northern Ireland and the Republic.

The varied programme of lectures was related to the special needs of Ireland's birds and habitats: talks on Irish Forests (Andrew McLean) and Wetlands (Anthony Whilde) set the background for accounts of experience elsewhere which could possibly be used to advantage in Ireland, on Woodcock (John Wilson), Ouse Washes (Cliff Carson), reed-beds (Colin Bibby) and Wales (Roger Lovegrove). The conference closed with summaries of recent achievements and current work of the IWC and Northern Ireland RSPB by Richard Nairn and Dinah Browne respectively. Dinah was also responsible for most of the smooth-running organisation of the conference. The venue, perhaps designed to provide enforced daily exercise on the students, involved lengthy (and often wet and windy) commuting from residences to the main building, and from lecture hall to

dining areas through a tortuous maze of corridors and staircases, but most of us had it worked out by the time we had to leave. But it is unfair to complain about a situation which provided Saturday lunchtime diners with superb views of a Peregrine flying around and perched on its prey just outside the dining room window, with the picturesque Bann valley in the background. Saturday-afternoon field-trips to various mainly coastal sites produced five Iceland and nine Glaucous Gulls, as well as flocks of Greenland Whitefronts and Whooper Swans.

The traditional *British Birds* mystery photograph competition proved more tricky than usual: the best score of only three (out of five) correct identifications was shared by Dave Allen, Stephen Foster, Dave Hunter and Bob Scott. Having reached this stage in our competition on many occasions, without winning the bottle of champagne prize, we were pleased that Bob Scott was successful in the hat-draw on this occasion. (*Contributed by PJG*)

ROC photo winners The Reading Ornithological Club ran an interesting members' evening in early March. Some 200 colour transparencies, submitted for three cate-

gories ('Birds away from the nest', 'Natural history subjects other than birds', and 'Evocative, atmospheric photographs'), were judged by Eric Hosking, Bernard Sparks and Dr J. T. R. Sharrock. The standard was exceptionally high, with four to six photographs short-listed in each category. When the assessing was completed, the judges found that Peggy Heard had won two categories, with a Martial Eagle and a kudu, both photographed in the Kruger National Park, and R. S. Leeke had won the third, with 'Sunrise at Corfu'; Peggy Heard's Martial Eagle also gained for her the prize for best photograph in any category.

Bustard protection The León meeting revealed, amongst other things, that the Spanish population of the Great Bustard *Otis tarda* is much lower than the fairly recent estimates of 16,000 individuals: the true figure is now thought to be 8,000-9,000. This is still by far the largest and most important population of this rare and declining species, so the Spanish Government is to be commended for agreeing in November 1982 to continue the ban on shooting which they imposed some time ago. The ICBP, too, is to be congratulated for its prompt action following the appearance in the French hunting magazine *Le Saint Hubert* of an Air Afrique advertisement promoting hunting in Senegal and showing trophies of three rare bustards . . . the result was a government move giving total protection to all bustard species in Senegal.

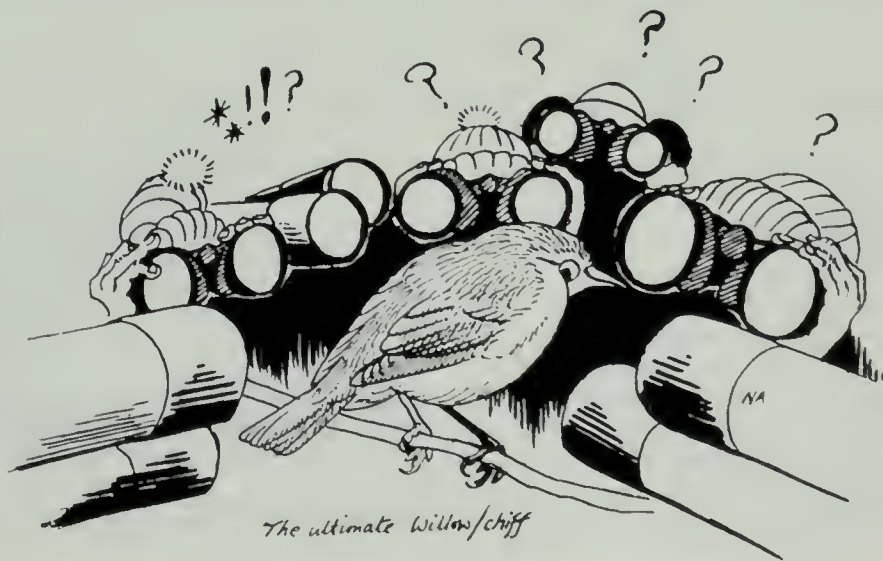
Arlott's Warbler The production of the heading drawing for the paper by Stan and Sue da Prato (page 248) created this horrific vision in the mind of Norman Arlott.

'Bustard Studies' This is the title of a new journal from the Bustard Group of the International Council for Bird Preservation. The first issue contains a full, fascinating and very readable account of the Group's 1979 expedition to Fuerteventura in the Canary Islands in search of the Canarian Houbara *Chlamydotis undulata fuertaventurae*. It contains not only a very full appraisal of the current status of this endemic race (estimating 80-100 birds on Fuerteventura and 15-20 on Lanzarote) and its conservation problems, but also a wealth of information on the general ecology of the islands and a very useful annotated systematic list of all species seen. There is a great deal to interest bustard addicts here, plus a whole lot of other fascinating material; if future issues are as good as this one they will be well worth waiting for. Subsequent issues will cover the status of bustards in India; the proceedings of the 1982 West European Bustard Symposium in León (Spain); and the bustard situation in Africa. The first issue is available (£5.00, post free) from ICBP, 219c Huntingdon Road, Cambridge CB3 0DL.

New Recorder for Sutherland A. R. Mainwood, 13 Ben Bhraggie Drive, Golspie, Sutherland, has taken over from Dr I. D. Pennie as Recorder for Sutherland.

New Recorder for Argyll and Inner Hebrides R. F. Coomber, 4 Staffa Cottages, Tobermory, Isle of Mull PA75 6PL, has taken over from M. J. P. Gregory as Recorder for Argyll and the Inner Hebrides.

New Recorder for Northumberland Mike S. Hodgson, 45 Elmtree Gardens, Whitley Bay, Tyne & Wear, has taken over from Alan Heavisides as Recorder for Northumberland.



New Manx stamps The Isle of Man Post Office Authority has just produced a new and very attractive series of definitive stamps depicting Manx marine birds in local settings, designed by John Nicholson, the island's foremost landscape artist. The 1p shows Puffins at Cranstal, on the low sand cliffs in the north of the island, although there is no evidence that any Puffin has ever set foot there! In contrast, Gannets diving off the Point of Ayre on the 2p could hardly be more appropriate as one of the island's most typical summer scenes. Although the Calf of Man has about 30 pairs, Lesser Black-backed Gulls breed only sporadically among Herring Gulls on the main island coast: the 5p shows them in a typical setting on the east coast at Santon. Cormorants feature close to their main breeding colony (20-25 pairs) at Maughold Head on the 8p. The fine sandstone cliffs at White Strand on the west coast are shown on the 10p, but the chosen bird, the Kittiwake, breeds only on Peel Hill, the Calf, the coast southwest of Port St Mary and at Maughold Head. Half the substantial Shag population is found on the Calf, where they are shown on the 11p. The 12p shows a typical scene with Grey Herons in the bay near Douglas, not far from the largest heronry. Herring Gulls with Peel Castle beyond appear on the 13p, while the 14p shows Razorbills at the south of the Calf. Appropriately, Great Black-backed Gulls on

the 15p show the Kitterland with the Calf beyond, although it is a pity that the dark greys and blacks of *fuscus* and *marinus* are haphazardly mixed on the two stamps. The set is completed by Shelduck on the 16p and Oystercatchers on the 18p. Four higher values will appear in October 1983, showing Arctic Terns, Guillemots, Redshanks and Mute Swans. What a pity that room could not be found for two of the island's most typical species: Black Guillemot and Ringed Plover. (Contributed by Dr Pat Cullen)

Guide for the disabled The Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation (RADAR) has just produced an impressive guide *The Countryside and Wildlife for Disabled People*. The title-page blurb describes it as a 'regional access guide to nature reserves, country parks and open spaces throughout the United Kingdom' and it is just that—an immensely valuable little volume which no disabled birder or naturalist should be without. Its compiler is the RSPB's own expert in these matters, Anthony Chapman, and it is very clear from all the entries that he has used his wide personal experience to produce a practical approach to the problems the disabled can face. The guide is available (for a mere £1.60, post free) from RADAR, 25 Mortimer Street, London W1X 8AB.

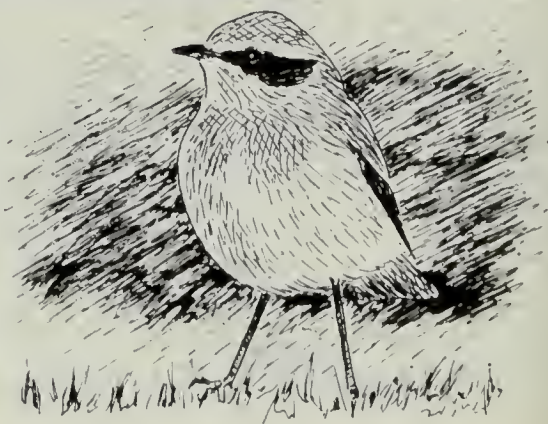
Recent reports

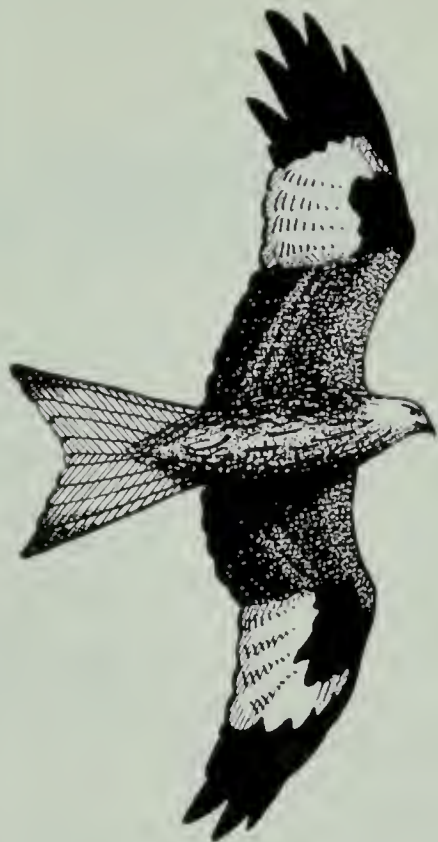
K. Allsopp and R. A. Hume

These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records

All dates refer to March, unless otherwise stated.

At the beginning of the month, high pressure to the south and west brought cool west to northwest winds. From 8th, the anti-cyclone moved slowly eastwards across the country and into Europe, a stream of warm air moving north on its western flank bringing a scattering of migrants to western areas on 12th. Thereafter, high pressure returned to the south and west with further cool westerlies, and some cold northerlies.





Stephen Abbott

Early spring migrants

The short-lived pulse of warm air which arrived over western districts on 12th brought a scattering of **Sand Martins** *Riparia riparia*, **Chiffchaffs** *Phylloscopus collybita*, and a precocious **Swift** *Apus apus* to Carrigaline (Co. Cork) on 13th. **Hoopoes** *Upupa epops*, which often feature in these early movements, arrived at Lodmoor (Dorset), Clonakilty and Kilkerran Lake (Co. Cork) on 13th, with others reported from Cornwall. A sad find, also on 13th, was a **Great Spotted Cuckoo** *Clamator glandarius* dead on the shoreline at North Bull (Co. Dublin). The expected early migrant **Wheatears** *Oenanthe oenanthe* and **Black Redstarts** *Phoenicurus ochruros* started to arrive in the settled anticyclonic weather from 6th, and the first pairs of **Garganeys** *Anas querquedula* were reported from Freckleton (Lancashire) on 12th and Dungeness (Kent) on 13th. Very few migrants were reported during the rest of the month, but included a **House Martin** *Delichon urbica* and a **Sedge Warbler** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* in Ireland on 19th, a white-spotted **Bluethroat** *Luscinia svecica cyanecula* at Rye Meads (Hertfordshire) on

4th, two **Serins** *Serinus serinus* in Devon on 30th and, from early April, a **Wryneck** *Jynx torquilla* at Portland (Dorset). Unusual wintering passerine reports were of a **Rose-coloured Starling** *Sturnus roseus* at Market Deeping (Lincolnshire) and numerous reports of **Blackcaps** *Sylvia atricapilla*. The **Rock Thrush** *Monticola saxatilis* on the Isle of Sheppey (Kent) stayed throughout March, and a summer-plumaged **Snow Bunting** *Plectrophenax nivalis* was seen in the Isles of Scilly in early April.

Owls of protest

The discovery of a **Tengmalm's Owl** *Aegolius junereus* roosting at Spurn (Humbly Grove) on 6th was most exciting, the roost being finally deserted by 28th. The decision to suppress the news of its occurrence will have displeased many, but the potential disruption to the running of the coastguard rescue service station adjacent to the roost, by the inevitable flood of watchers, was considered too great. The difficult decision, made on the grounds of public safety, should be respected.

No less exciting—and perhaps more so—were reports of raptors on the move, with a **Red Kite** *Milvus milvus* at Minsmere (Suffolk) on 3rd, a **Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus* at Cranfield (Bedfordshire) on 28th and **Gyrfalcons** *Falco rusticolus* at Kilcoole (Co. Wicklow) on 5th and—a white-plumaged bird—on South Uist (Western Isles) on 7th April.

Ties with Sandy?

The RSPB emblem bird, the **Avocet** *Recurvirostra avosetta*, featured in an unusual movement close to Sandy (Bedfordshire) on 27th and 28th. A flock numbering 20 was reported flying over Barkers Lane Gravel-pits (Bedfordshire), with another 24 at Willen Lake (Buckinghamshire) and a further 17 at



Ringstead Gravel-pits (Northamptonshire). Another flock of 15 arrived at Dungeness on 27th.

Other waders seen included a **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* in Dorset in late March and a **Grey Phalarope** *Phalaropus fulicarius* at Dungeness on 23rd. The Dorset cliffs was an unusual place to see a **Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia*, but one was reported there on 12th and 13th, and equally strange was a **Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris* in a Dorset chicken-run at Weymouth on 4th. A **Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea* was seen at Slapton (Devon) on 19th.

Gulls and terns

The increasing interest in gulls again resulted in another batch of records of interesting species. The total winter tally of **Iceland Gulls** *Larus glaucoideus* for Ireland was estimated at 60, and this month seven were seen in the southwest. **Mediterranean Gulls** *L. melanocephalus* became more evident, with ten estimated present at Weymouth, five in Torbay (Devon), three in Ireland, two at Easington (Humberside) on 17th, and one wintering at Seaforth (Merseyside). **Ring-billed Gulls** *L. delawarensis* continue to be identified in increasing numbers: four were reported in Ireland, and seven on the English southwest coast. An **Ivory Gull** *Pagophila eburnea* was found—unfortunately dead—in Wexford Harbour on 26th.

Sandwich Terns *Sterna sandvicensis* began returning during the month, the first report being from Dungeness on 2nd.



Wildfowl

Very few unusual ducks were present this winter. The Northamptonshire **American Wigeon** *Anas americana* was still present at Ringstead Gravel-pits on 12th, a **Ferruginous Duck** *Aythya nyroca* arrived at Framlingham Mere (Suffolk) on 12th and a Nearctic 'green-winged' **Teal** *Anas crecca carolinensis* was present at Minsmere (Suffolk) on 19th. In Scotland, wintering birds still present in early April were a **Surf Scoter** *Melanitta perspicillata* in Spey Bay (Grampian) and a **King Eider** *Somateria mollissima* on Loch Fleet (Highland).

Latest news

Early May: **Crane** *Grus grus* Cley (Norfolk); **Baird's Sandpiper** *Calidris bairdii* Titchwell (Norfolk); **Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Limicola falcinellus* Elmley (Kent); **Alpine Swift** *Apus melba* Wraysbury (Berkshire); and **Rock Thrush** Royston (Hertfordshire).

Review

Birds of Gloucestershire. By Christopher M. Swaine. Alan Sutton, Gloucester, 1982. 236 pages; three colour plates; 29 black-and-white plates; 25 line-drawings. 1982. £7.95.

This new avifauna of Gloucestershire, the first since 1902, is divided roughly into two parts: the first 100-or-so pages giving descriptions of the county, its ornithology, ornithological organisations and status changes, and the second 100-or-so pages constituting the obligatory systematic list. The descriptive chapters give a good view, under four headings: 'The Wye Valley and the Forest of Dean', 'The Severn Vale', 'The Cotswolds' and 'The Thames Area'. These are illustrated by well-chosen photographs, although the reproduction is sometimes rather 'flat'. The 'Annotated List of Species' covers all records up to the end of 1980, devoting an average of 15 lines to each of the 287 species recorded in the county. Each entry starts with a useful, succinct status summary. Unlike a number of other recent county avifaunas, records are not summarised by means of maps, histograms or graphs. There is a useful appendix listing records of birds reputed to have occurred in Gloucestershire but which are not now accepted; two in the main list might perhaps have appeared in this appendix (a male or perhaps a pair of Red-breasted Flycatchers in August 1935, and a Crested Tit in December 1930). The whole book has a liberal scattering of evocative drawings by Carol Ogilvie. With attractive production and a commendably low price, this book will appeal to everyone having an interest in the birds of Gloucestershire.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

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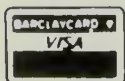
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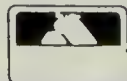
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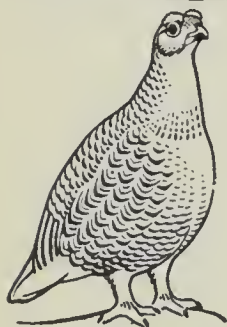
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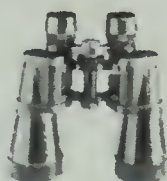
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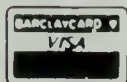
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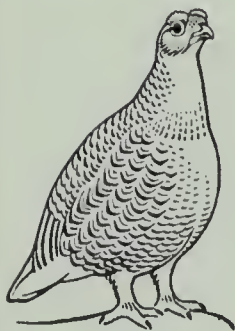
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VOLUME 76 NUMBER 7 JULY 1983



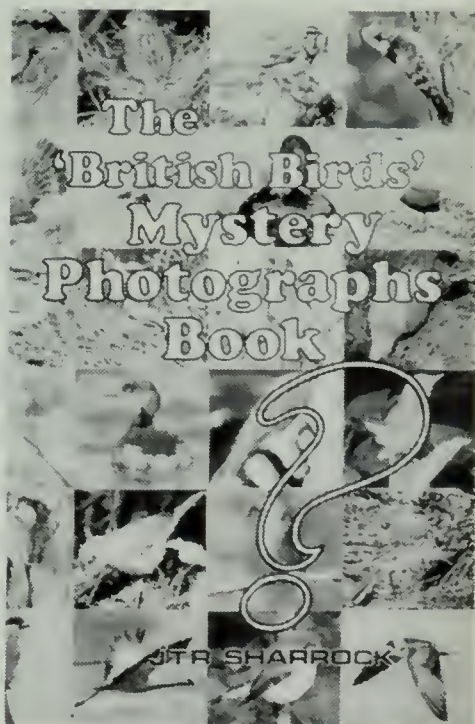
'The "British Birds" Mystery Photographs Book'

To provide some ornithological entertainment and to help to subsidise *BB* by augmenting the journal's income, we shall be publishing a special book on 10th October 1983.

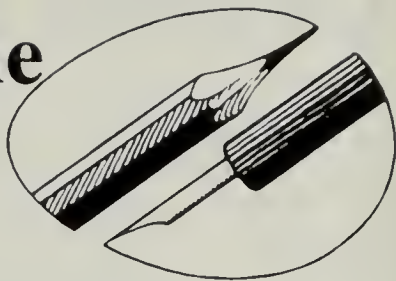
The 'British Birds' Mystery Photographs Book is unique. It includes a selection of photographs which purchasers have to try to identify, and there are cryptic clues to one extra bird species. The first person to identify all the birds correctly will win a cheque for £1,000, and the prize fund could rise to £4,000 or more (50p will be added to the fund for every copy sold).

The usual price of the book is £4.80, but *BB* subscribers can obtain it (post free in UK & Eire) for only £3.80. Since purchasers have the opportunity to be the discoverer of the secret of the book's enigma, and to win at least £1,000, as well as to have some fun, *we are relying on every 'BB' subscriber buying a copy.*

If you order and pay for your copy now (see page ix), it will be despatched to you in mid August 1983, two months in advance of publication. This is a special service for *BB* readers only. EDS



‘Bird Illustrator of the Year’ and ‘The Richard Richardson Award’



The 52 artists who submitted their drawings for the fifth of these annual competitions was about the same total as in the last two years. The two senior judges were joined by Alan Harris, last year's winner.

With over 200 drawings to consider, judging was slow, but seven artists were finally in the running for the top placings. At this stage, we became hypercritical and, even when the seven were reduced to three, it took some time to arrive at an agreed result. The winners are as follows:

BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR, 1983

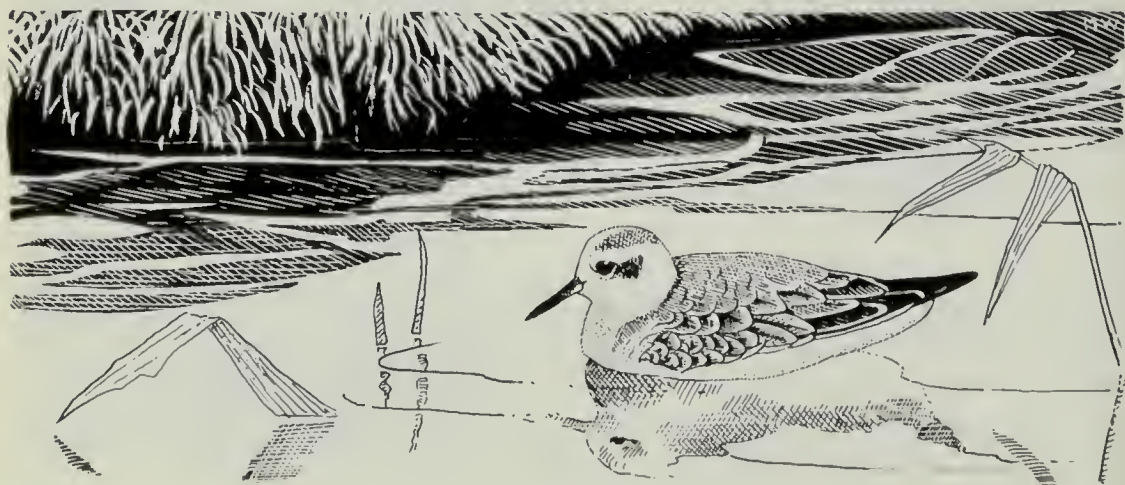
- 1st Martin W. Woodcock (Tonbridge, Kent)
- 2nd Bruce Pearson (Great Gransden, Bedfordshire)
- 3rd Rodney Ingram (Ecton, Northamptonshire)

THE RICHARD RICHARDSON AWARD, 1983

- 1st Gary Wright (Southend-on-Sea, Essex)

The number of entrants for the Richard Richardson Award was again disappointingly low; we appeal to readers of *BB* who know of promising young artists to encourage them to enter next year.

We placed Ernest Leahy unofficial fourth in the senior competition, mainly on the strength of his excellent drawing of a Wryneck, which will be used on a cover later in the year. Indeed, as usual, several covers in the coming 12 months will feature drawings submitted for the competitions, and many others will find their way onto the pages of *BB*: a most useful by-product of the competitions, giving artists perhaps their first opportunity to see their work in print.

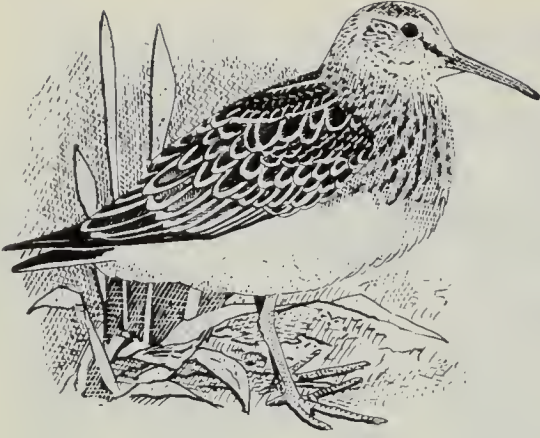


Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius* (Martin W. Woodcock)



Little Owl *Athene noctua* (Rodney Ingram)

Martin Woodcock's winning set of drawings met the main requirement of the competition admirably. All four drawings were entirely suitable for use in or on the cover of *BB*. His drawing of Eleonora's Falcon on this month's cover is a bold, decorative design, the foliage framing the bird with variety in the weight of tonal mass and line. Bruce Pearson produced drawings with original and lively compositions and interesting textures. Rodney Ingram, second last year, is again among the winners with some characteristically vigorous scraperboards. The drawings by the winner of the Richard Richardson Award, Gary Wright, show considerable promise,



Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* (Martin W. Woodcock)

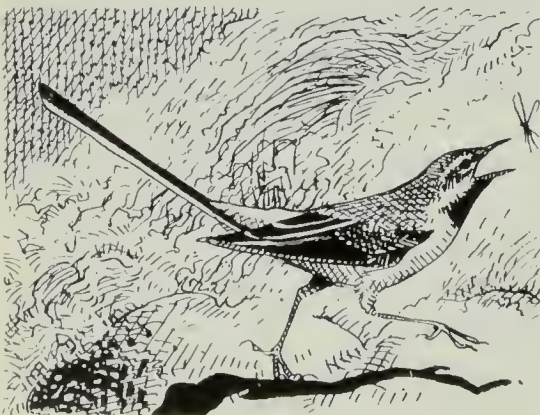
carrying the conviction of work that is based on original observation. His two closest contenders were Peter Cartwright and Keith Colcombe, whose work we also look forward to seeing entered in future competitions.



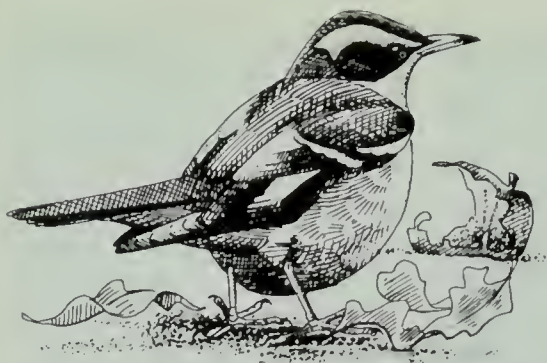
Greater Flamingos *Phoenicopterus ruber* (Bruce Pearson)

We believe that it will be useful to draw attention to some technical points about presentation. Each drawing should have a generous 'handling margin', but it is not essential to mount entries. The work of two artists was ineligible because the instructions about size were not followed (these sadly included one set that would have contended strongly for a place in the top three).

A few artists submitted work unsuitable for reproduction by line in *BB*.



Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* (Bruce Pearson)



Varied Thrush *Zoothera naevia* (Gary Wright)

There were wash-drawings or illustrations with so much fine detail and gradation of tone, that only half-tone could have done them justice.

Many of the points made in previous reports about drawing birds still apply and bear repetition. The drawing of a bird's feet presents problems for many artists, and few can get away with trying to hide them behind leaves or in other ingenious ways (particularly in each of a set of four drawings!). Bills, and the way they fit onto the skull, provide another source of difficulty for some, and the open beak in particular is a trap for many artists: better kept shut until the problem is understood and resolved! The arrangement of primaries, secondaries, tertials and wing-coverts is often totally misunderstood, and greatly over emphasised. The number of these feathers appears to be totally arbitrary in some drawings. The scale of the bird to its habitat is another pitfall. Colossal shore-birds striding along Lilliputian beaches may gain a judge's smile, but not a prize.

All the drawings by the four prizewinners will be exhibited in the Annual Exhibition of the Society of Wildlife Artists at the Mall Galleries, The Mall, London SW1, during 16th-27th July 1983.

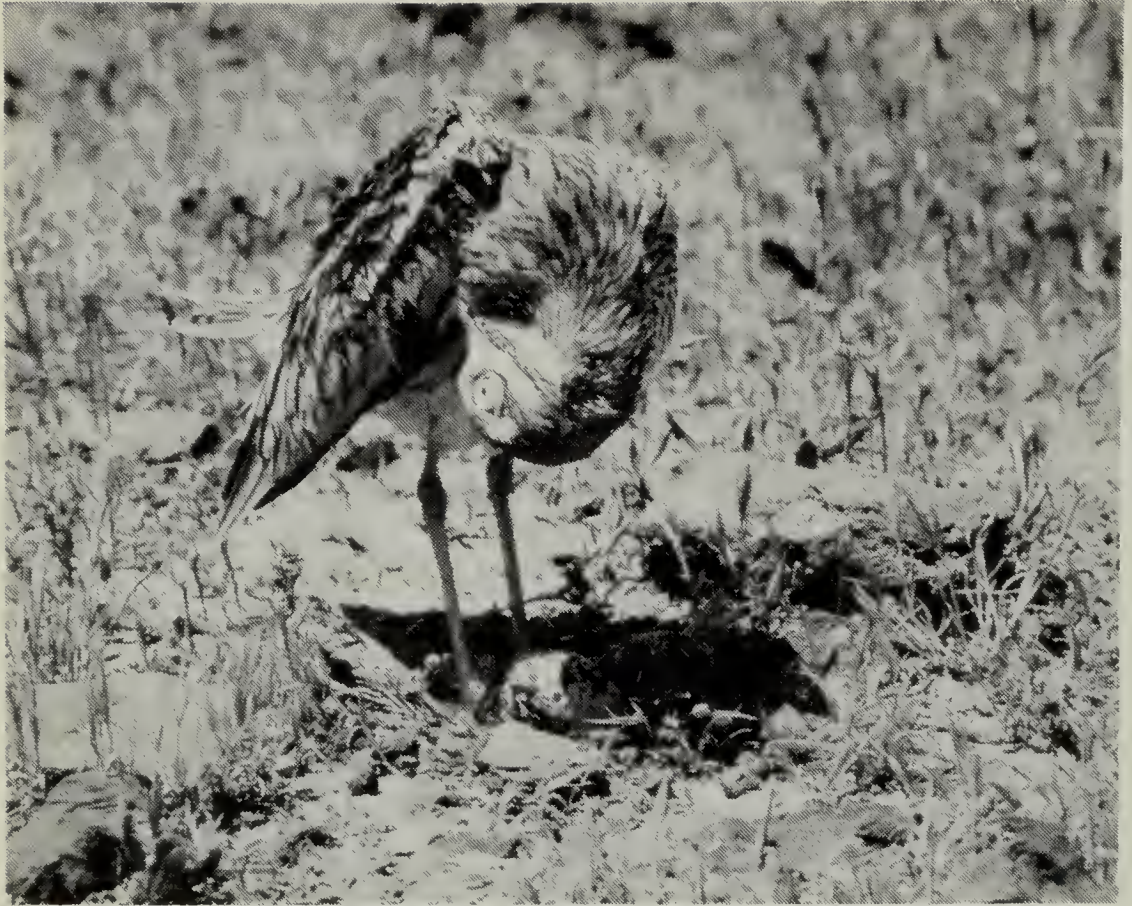
ROBERT GILLMOR, ALAN HARRIS and J. T. R. SHARROCK

Breeding of Stone-curlews at Weeting Heath, Norfolk

N. J. Westwood



Typically, the Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus* breeds in dry sandy or stony areas and chalky downlands with sparse vegetation. Its traditional habitats in Britain are the extensive brecklands and heaths of



129. Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus*, Portugal, May 1972 (Kevin Carlson)

East Anglia and the southern downlands from Kent to Dorset. Like some other southern species (e.g. Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*, Wryneck *Jynx torquilla* and Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*), it has declined markedly in range and numbers in Britain over the last 50 years, associated with loss of habitat (Parslow 1967, Sharrock 1976). Most of its old breeding haunts have fallen to cultivation, while much of the East Anglian Brecks are now afforested. Nevertheless, it shows great site tenacity and, when not disturbed, continues to breed in the same areas, even forest rides. Stone-curlews returning to sites now cultivated lose eggs and young during farming operations: an analysis of BTO nest record cards showed that 33% of eggs lost were destroyed by farm machinery (Glue & Morgan 1974). Otherwise, the breeding of the Stone-curlew has not been well studied, and this paper presents some observations made during 1971-78 on five pairs nesting on Weeting Heath National Nature Reserve, Norfolk.

Study area and methods

Weeting Heath covers approximately 1.8km², has an open calcareous sandy soil with abundant flints and chalk fragments, and is covered with short grass, mainly red fescue *Festuca rubra*, hair-grass *Koeleria gracilis* and meadow oat-grass *Helictotrichon pratense* (Duffy & Morris 1966). Lichens and moss are also abundant, especially on the areas heavily grazed by rabbits *Oryctolagus cuniculus*. The heath is enclosed by a wire-netting fence to maintain a high rabbit population and a heavily grazed turf typical of the old Brecks; the effects are particularly marked in the southern section,

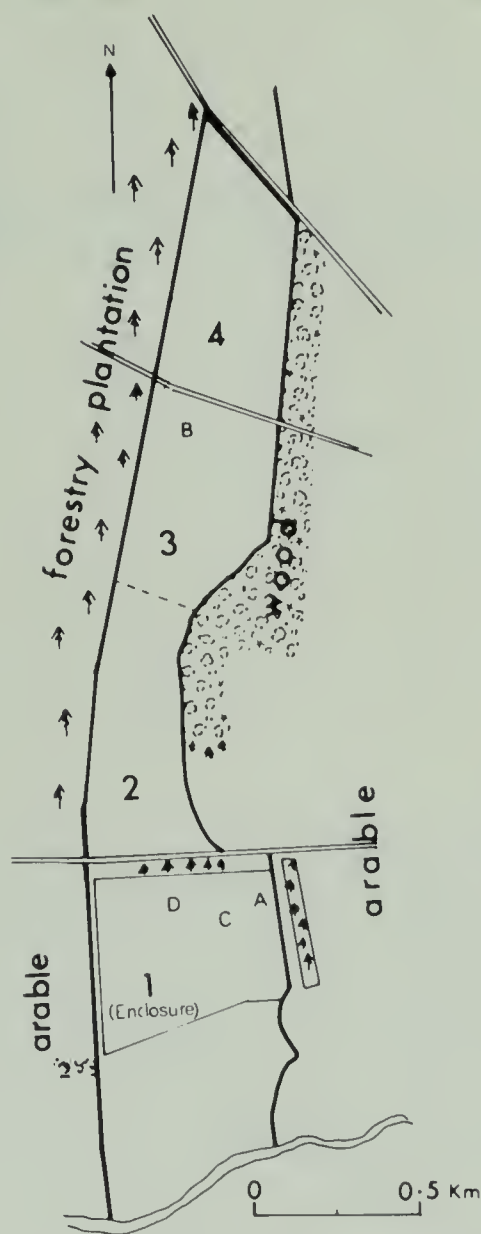


Fig. 1. Weeting Heath National Nature Reserve, Norfolk, showing study areas, and sites A, B, C, D where pitfall samples were collected.

known as the Enclosure (fig. 1), which has always had a well-maintained fence. This area held four of the five Stone-curlew pairs.

Observations were made as often as possible, with at least one visit a week during most breeding seasons, and one a month during each winter. Each year the number of pairs present was recorded and an attempt was made to follow their breeding success, keeping disturbance to a minimum. All nests located were checked at frequent intervals. As many young as possible were caught, weighed, and individually marked with numbered BTO rings.

To obtain information on invertebrate numbers, a series of pitfall traps was operated at sites A (eight traps) and B (four traps) (fig. 1), where adult and young Stone-curlews were seen feeding in summer 1971. Additionally, four traps were placed at C in 1973 and four at D during 1975-77. Each trap was a 1-lb (454-g) jam jar with a 5-cm diameter opening, containing a

25-mm mixture of one part ethelene glycol to four parts of water. The jars were set in the ground, in rows about $4\frac{1}{2}$ m apart, checked and emptied at each visit. The captures are summarised in fig. 2.

Also, during 1973, four random samples, each one yard square (0.84m^2), in sections 1 and 3 were treated fortnightly from March until July with dilute formalin (see Raw 1959) to obtain an estimate of the number of earthworms (*Oligochaeta*) present. Each square was watched for 15 minutes, then checked frequently for a further 10-30 minutes. As no earthworms were collected from any of these squares, this sampling was discontinued in July, though observations showed that earthworms were present on the heath, at least in some years. Presumably they were too deep to be affected by the formalin (also, samples were taken in mid morning, whereas earthworms are more active during the night and early morning).

Food and food availability

Witherby *et al.* (1943) listed a variety of food items, ranging from various

Table 1. Food items from analysis of pellets, faeces and stomach

F = faeces; P = pellets; S = stomach

	MAY				
	1	15	15	24	30
	P	P+F	P	P	F
	Nest	Nest	Nest	Nest	Nest
Earthworms (Oligochaeta)	++	++	++	++	+
Earwigs <i>Forficula</i>	3				
Beetle (Coleoptera) heads	2	9	7		
elytra and other remains	+	+	+		+
Beetle larvae heads	2				
Spiders (Araneae)	+	+	+	+	+
Woodlice (Isopoda)	++	++			
Caterpillar skins	+				+
Grasshoppers (Orthoptera)					
Snail shells			1		
Diptera					
Diptera larvae					
Seed: sorrel/dock <i>Rumex</i>		1			
mouse-ear <i>Cerastium</i>					
Unidentified	1		3	5	
Vegetation	+		+	+	
Chickweed <i>Stellaria</i> leaves					

invertebrates to voles (*Microtinae*) and gamebird chicks, but mainly land molluscs, earthworms and insects. In Israel, Mienis (1978) found from droppings that Stone-curlews were feeding almost entirely on the land snail *Theba pisana*. At Weeting, the Stone-curlews were mainly nocturnal and fed infrequently during the day. Even when they were seen feeding, it was usually impossible to tell what was taken, although earthworms were occasionally identified: in 1975, R. Pimm watched an adult carrying earthworms back to its chicks. I watched an adult feeding itself and a half-grown chick on the intestines of a rabbit which had died from myxomatosis; R. Southwood saw a Stone-curlew feeding on rabbit guts, and also saw one killing a five-day-old Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* chick, and another eating a clutch of four Skylark *Alauda arvensis* eggs.

Further information was obtained from two young chicks (one killed by a

Table 2. Laying date of first egg for each pair of Stone-curlews *Burhinus* between first and NR = not

Year	1	Interval between 1 and 2 (days)	2	3	Interval between 2 and 3 (days)	4
	Date first bird seen		Date of 1st egg	Date of 1st egg 2nd pair		Date of 1st egg 3rd pair
1973	April 15	11	April 26	April 30	4	May 6/7
1974	April 5	16	April 21	April 29	8	May 2/3
1975	April 11	11	April 22	April 23	1	May 1
1976	April 1	29	April 30	May 12	12	—
1977	March 16	48	May 3	May 6	3	May 16
1978	NR		May 1	May 7	6	May 11

Contents of breckland, Norfolk, Stone-curlews *Burhinus oedicnemus*

Contents; + = present; ++ = abundant

JUNE			JULY		AUGUST	
31	22	9	27	27	27	15
S	S	S	P+F	P+F	F	F
Pullus	Pullus	Adult	Nest	Nest	Standing adult	Pullus
	1	8	++	++	++	++
	1	17				2
			1			
+	+	+		+		+
	+		+			
	2		+	+	+	
	7	2				
				+		
	4				+	
	1			1		
		9		1		
					+	
					+	
				10		

tractor on the Elveden Estate, a similar type of breckland habitat, the second found dead in section 1) and an adult, also from the Brecks, sent to Monks Wood Experimental Station during 1975. Their stomach contents, presumably biased towards harder-bodied invertebrates, were in line with the findings given in Witherby *et al.* (1943). A few pellets and faeces found around one or two nests, usually towards the end of incubation, also contained similar remains (table 1).

Most of the invertebrate groups concerned were also found in the traps, particularly woodlice (Isopoda), beetles (Coleoptera) and spiders (Araneae) (fig. 2); in most years, the number of animals increased from April or early May, to a peak during June or July. The higher totals recorded at site B were usually due to larger numbers of woodlice.

There was no obvious relationship between food supply (as measured in

oedicnemus at Weeting Heath, Norfolk, 1973-78, and laying interval

Subsequent pairs

Recorded

5			6		Spread of laying (days)
Interval between 2 and 4 (days)	Date of 1st egg 4th pair	Interval between 2 and 5 (days)	Date 1st egg pair on Section 3	Interval between 2 and 6 (days)	
10	Late May	20+	May 25/27	29/31	29/31
11	May 18	27	May 9	18	27
9	May 11-14	19-22	April 24/25	2/3	19/22
	—		May 11	11	12
13	—		June 1	29	29
10	NR		May 9	8	10

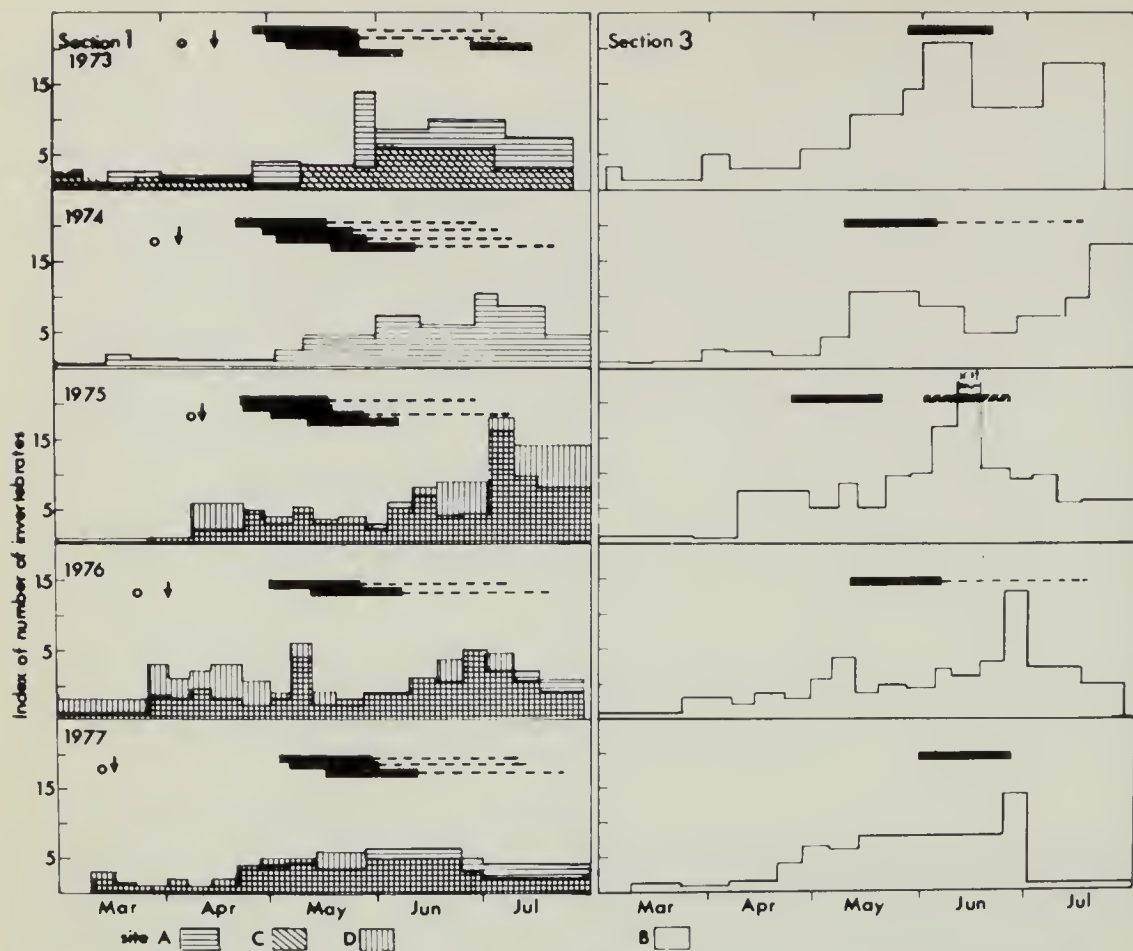


Fig. 2. Pattern of invertebrate availability at Weeting Heath, Norfolk, 1973-77, based on pitfall samples in section 1 (Enclosure) and section 3, with egg-laying schedules (solid bars) and repeat clutches (hatched bars) for pairs of Stone-curlews *Burhinus oedinenus*: dotted line indicates periods between hatching and fledging of young (also clutches which produced young). Open circle indicates date of visit prior to sighting first Stone-curlew; arrow indicates date first individual seen

the traps) and breeding success. This would not necessarily be expected, however, if breeding failures were caused by factors unrelated to food supply, and if the birds obtained part of their food off the heath, as seemed to be the case (see Discussion).

Breeding season

Five pairs were recorded during each of the first six years, and four during the next two. One of these nested at the northern end of the heath, on either section 3 or section 4, and all the other pairs in the Enclosure (fig. 1).

The first Stone-curlews were seen during the first week of April in most years, but once on 16th March. The interval between first sighting and the first egg varied from 11 days to 48 days. It was not possible to obtain precise laying dates for all clutches, but, where the hatching date was known, laying date was calculated assuming an incubation period of 25-27 days (Witherby *et al.* 1943). Three clutches for which both laying and hatching dates were known had incubation periods of 26, 26 and 25 days, respectively.

In most years, the first eggs were laid during the last week of April, but

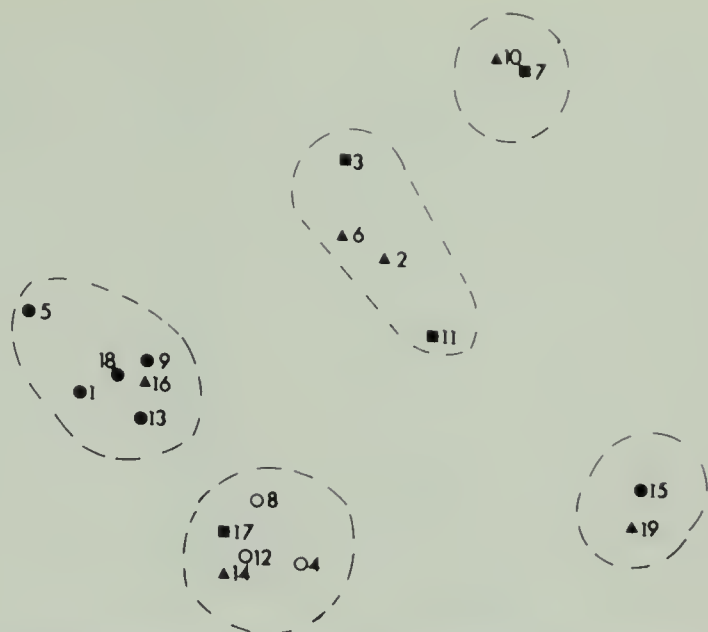


Fig. 3. Diagrammatic plot of annual nesting sites of Stone-curlews *Burhinus oedicnemus*, to show nest positions of each pair. Numbers refer to clutches listed in table 4. Solid circle: position of first pair to lay each year; triangle: second pair to lay; square: third pair to lay; open circle: fourth pair to lay

different pairs showed little synchrony (table 2 and fig. 2), and the spread of laying dates varied from ten to 31 days. Except in 1977, the first pair to lay each year nested in the same place (fig. 3), and usually produced larger eggs.

130. Stone-curlews *Burhinus oedicnemus*, Suffolk, June 1940 (Eric Hosking)

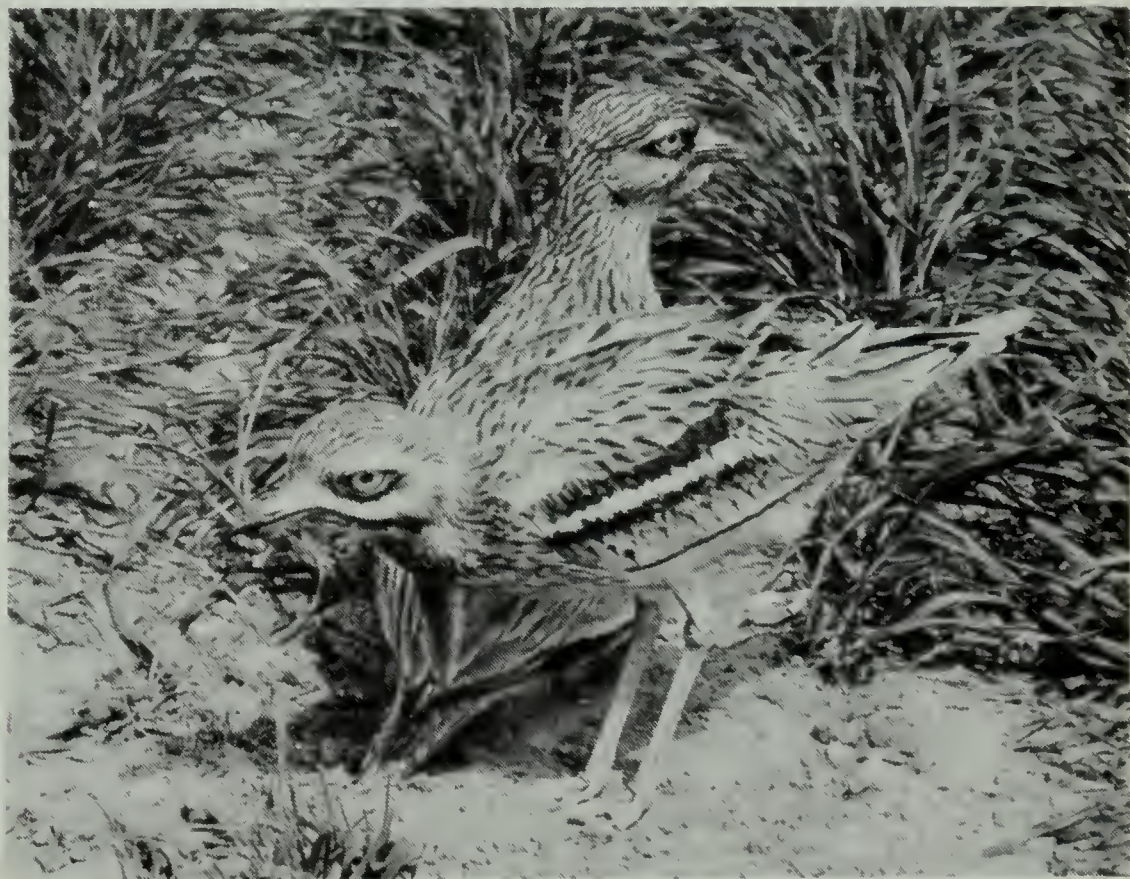


Table 3. Hatching and fledging success of

Year	No. of pairs	No. of eggs laid	No. of eggs hatched (%)
1971	5	10	8
	repeat	2	0
1972	3	6	4
1973	5	10	8
	repeat	2	2
1974	5	9	8
1975	5	9	6
	repeat	2	0
1976	1 (+1) ¹	6	5
1977	4	8	6
1978	4	8	8
	repeat	2	2
TOTALS		74	57 (77)

1 One pair nested in a field just off the area and brought one half grown young onto the heath
2 Of 1 young considered to have fledged, having survived 20 days, one was found dead on the road
3 Omitting 1972, 39%

Clutch size and weight

Stone-curlews usually lay two eggs, sometimes only one and occasionally three (Witherby *et al.* 1943). From 74 nest record cards, Glue & Morgan (1974) calculated a mean clutch size of 1.9. Of 38 clutches examined in the present study only two were of one egg, and the mean clutch size was 1.95; the two one-egg clutches were laid in 1974 and 1975 (table 3), perhaps by the same female. During 1976, one pair failed to lay.

All eggs were weighed when found and whenever possible on subsequent

Table 4. Weight of eggs of Stone-curlews *Burhinus*
Numbers in parentheses

Year	1 FIRST PAIR TO LAY		2 SECOND PAIR TO LAY	
	Egg wt(g)	Clutch wt(g)	Egg wt(g)	Clutch wt(g)
1973	(1) 48.0 } 46.0 }	94.0	(2) 39.0 } 35.0 }	74.0
1974	(5) 45.0 } 44.0 }	89.0	(6) 36.0	36.0
1975	(9) 50.5 } 48.5 }	99.0	(10) 42.0 } 38.5 }	80.5
1976	(13) 38.5 } 35.5 }	74.0	(14) 41.0 } 39.5 }	80.5
1977	(15) 41.0 } 41.0 }	82.0	(16) 48.5 } 48.0 }	96.5
1978	(18) 45.5 } 44.0 }	89.5	(19) 42.0 } 38.0 }	80.0
Mean clutch weight	87.9±8.87		74.6±20.34	
Mean egg weight	43.96±4.33		40.7±4.34	

Stone-curlews *Burhinus oedichnemus* at Weeting Heath, Norfolk

No. of young at 31+ days old (fledged)	Age in days	Chicks fledged as % of eggs laid	No. of young fledged per pair
2 0	34	16	0.4
Not known, observation not continued			
3	31	25	0.6
6	40	67	1.2
3	31	27	0.6
3 (+1) ¹	33	50	0.8
4	20 ²	50	1.0
4	34	60	1.5
2			
27		36 ³	0.8

days after fledging, and a second was recovered in Spain in October 1978

visits. Not all clutches were found on the date of laying, but, as healthy eggs lose weight at a constant rate (Murton *et al.* 1974), it was possible to calculate the weight at laying for all eggs when date of hatching was known. The mean weight (\pm SD) of 24 clutches, including those of one egg but not repeats, was 78.96g (\pm 14.5); while the mean of 22, excluding clutches of one and all repeats, was 82.8g (\pm 7.1). The mean weight of 46 eggs at laying was 41.2g (\pm 3.7). In most years (1973-78), the earliest clutches tended to weigh more (mean 87.9g \pm 8.9) than those laid second (74.6g \pm 20.3).

oedichnemus in relation to order of laying in season
refer to position plotted on fig. 3

3 THIRD PAIR TO LAY		4 FOURTH PAIR TO LAY		PAIR WHICH LAID IN SECTION 3	
Egg wt(g)	Clutch wt(g)	Egg wt(g)	Clutch wt(g)	Egg wt(g)	Clutch wt(g)
3) 40.5 } 40.5 }	81.0	(4) No weights		39.0 } 39.0 }	78.0
7) 45.0 } 40.5 }	85.5	(8) 36.5 } 36.5 }	73.0	39.0 } 40.0 }	79.0
) 42.0 } 41.0 }	83.0	(12) 39.0	39.0	41.0 } 41.5 }	82.5
				40.0 } 39.5 }	79.5
) 40.25 } 42.25 }	82.5			36.5 } 36.5 }	75.0
Not weighed				41.0 } 42.0 }	83.0
82.7 \pm 2.23				79.5 \pm 2.97	
41.5 \pm 1.59				39.7 \pm 1.52	

though the difference was not statistically significant (table 4).

There appeared to be five distinct nesting areas used by females, the first pair to lay invariably choosing the same area, except for one year (1977) when the first clutch (15 in fig. 3) was laid about 150m away. Probably many of these sites were used by the same female in successive years (judged from similarity in egg colour and markings). The case in 1977 was probably a new female laying for the first time in a completely new area, while clutch 16 probably belonged to the female which usually laid first. In the following year, the first bird to lay (18) did so in the usual area, while the second (19) laid in the new area.

The pair laying third, and the pair in section 3 which laid at least a week later, all had heavier clutches on average (means $82.7\text{g} \pm 2.2$ and $79.5\text{g} \pm 2.97$, respectively) than the pair which laid second. In the case of the Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*, heavier eggs hatch more successfully than light ones (Murton *et al.* 1974), while in the domestic hen *Gallus domesticus* large chicks grow and survive better than small ones (Skoglund *et al.* 1952). At Weeting, Stone-curlews which laid first tended to raise more young than those laying later, but whether this was an effect of date or egg weight is unknown. During 1973-78, 12 eggs laid by the first pair produced nine young, whereas 31 eggs of subsequent layings produced only 14 young (repeat clutches excluded).

Hatching and fledging success

Of a total of 74 eggs laid during the eight years, 77% hatched successfully,

131. Stone-curlews *Burhinus oedicnemus*, Portugal, May 1972 (Kevin Carlson)



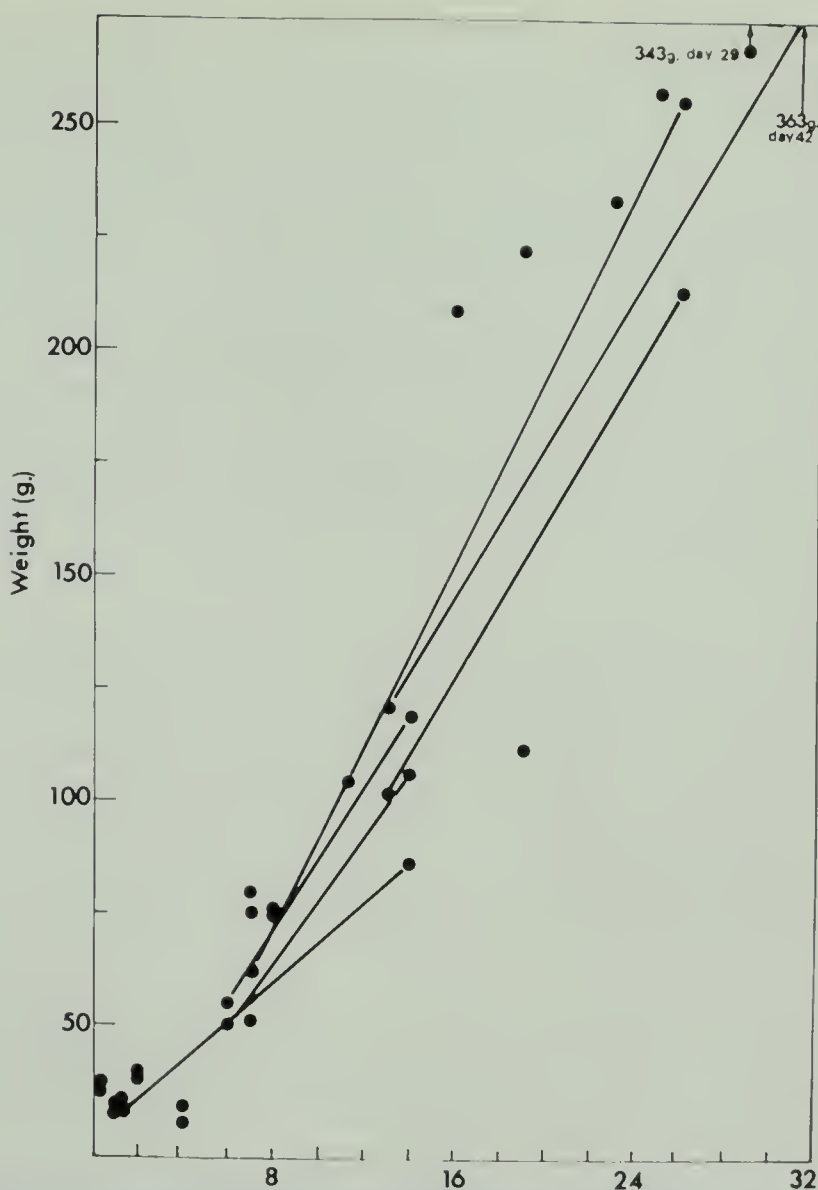


Fig. 4. Weights of young Stone-curlews *Burhinus oedichenus* at Weeting Heath, Norfolk, to show rate of growth before fledging. Lines join consecutive weights of some young though the annual hatching success varied from 54.5% in 1975 to 100% in 1978 (table 3). Glue & Morgan (1974) obtained the same average percentage for East Anglia.

Eight eggs which failed to hatch had a mean fresh weight of 38.5g (± 1.02); seven of these showed no sign of development and had probably been laid by the same female. Nine other eggs disappeared, but five of these may have hatched and the young died shortly afterwards.

Young Stone-curlews leave the nest soon after hatching, and, in my experience at Weeting and in the Brecks in general, stay in the close vicinity for at least a week. At Dungeness, Kent, Scott (1965) noted that young were led off the shingle on to grassland and moister areas, a journey which took up to five days; at Weeting, they are unable to move far because of the fencing.

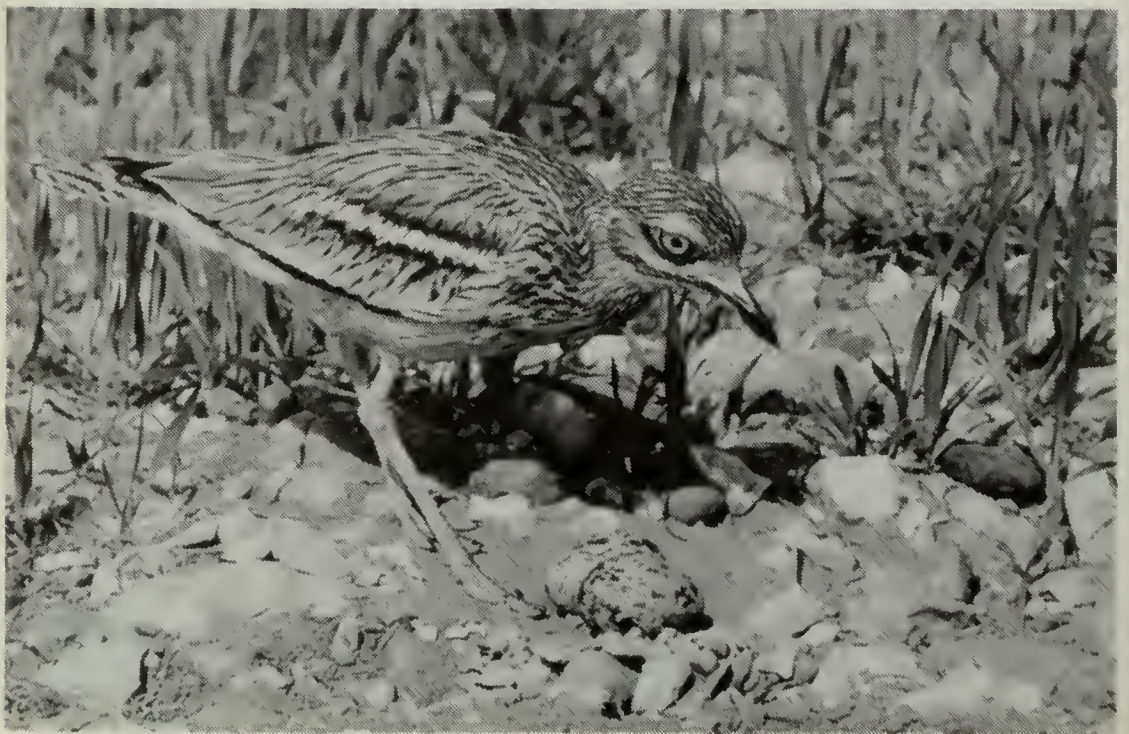
Weights of young are plotted against age in fig. 4 (all years combined). The data, although sparse, indicate a typical growth pattern: a slow increase for the first few days, followed by a more rapid growth as the young develop.

The young can fly at six weeks (Witherby *et al.* 1943): one aged 42 days could just fly the width of the Enclosure, but was unable to gain enough height to clear the 1.7-m fence. Because they became increasingly mobile as they grew, survival was difficult to estimate, but counts towards the end of the fledging period gave a good indication of the number surviving. In most cases, the young were between four and five weeks old when last recorded, and they probably survived well after reaching that age. During 1977, two of the four assumed to have fledged, the youngest being 20 days old when last recorded, were recovered 26 days and 15 months, respectively, after their assumed fledging date. In all, 27 young were fledged during the eight years. Omitting 1972, 39% of eggs laid produced young to fledging. The number of young reared per pair ranged from 0.4 in 1971 to 1.5 in 1978, with a mean over the seven years for which information was available of 0.8 young per pair (table 3).

Discussion

Pellets, faeces and pitfall samples from Weeting Heath indicated that earthworms, beetles, spiders and woodlice formed a major part of the diet, while casual observation indicated that larger prey, including carrion, were also taken. During one year when mid-morning sampling was carried out to measure earthworm numbers, none was recorded. Kollmannsperger (1955) found that the number of earthworms on soil at night was positively correlated with temperature, the optimum for activity being 10.5°C. Tischler (1955) pointed out that temperature extremes are greater on sandy soils, and on warm summer nights the number of active invertebrates seen per hour is twice as high as by day, but only half as many are observed on cold nights. As Stone-curlews prefer breeding on light sandy soils, this may be a clue both to their habitat preference and to their nocturnal feeding

132. Stone-curlew *Burhinus oediconemus*, Portugal, May 1972 (Kevin Carlson)



habit. For the Nightjar, a crepuscular species found on sandy heaths and also declining, Berry & Bibby (1981) showed a correlation between the growth rate of the chicks and the mean minimum temperature, and suggested that cold might suppress insect activity.

Adult Stone-curlews may not feed entirely on their breeding grounds at Weeting. They were frequently observed flying off towards the nearby pastures during the day and at dusk, while, during July 1976, R. Southwood noticed that they tended to spend the day on the breeding grounds, flying westwards at dusk to return at dawn. Lapwings also flew back and forth between their nests on the heath and surrounding arable land. Scott (1965) noted at Dungeness that, whenever he had a Stone-curlew nest under observation, the departing bird at the changeover made for the moister grassland to the north.

Small young are fed by the adults, food often being carried some distance: I have watched adults, during the daytime, walking 200-300m to half-grown young, apparently carrying only one item at a time. Do adults ferry food to their young at nights, from more distant feeding grounds?

As no relationship was apparent between the food supply on the heath and breeding success, factors operating elsewhere may have affected the population. Either way, Stone-curlews seemed to require two distinct areas for breeding, one suitable for nesting and a second for feeding. If so, this could be important for their conservation; it would be of little use keeping a suitable area of heath where the birds nested, if their feeding grounds were destroyed.

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to all those people who have helped me in a variety of ways. B. Spinks, R. Pimm and R. Southwood, wardens at Weeting Heath, provided much help and useful information. M. Adams and M. Lainsbury gave considerable assistance with the fieldwork, and with sorting pitfall samples during the summers of 1975 and 1976. It is a pleasure to thank Dr Ian Newton for his advice and for critically reading the drafts of this paper. The Nature Conservancy Council and the Norfolk Naturalists Trust gave their permission for me to work on Weeting Heath NNR. Finally, Mrs P. Glover typed from the manuscript.

Summary

Five pairs of Stone-curlews *Burhinus oedienemus* were studied on Weeting Heath NNR, Norfolk, during the breeding seasons of 1971-78. The first individuals usually arrived on the breeding grounds during the first week of April, and the first eggs were laid during the last week. Mean clutch size over the years was 1.95; and there was no evidence of a second brood, though single repeat clutches were laid in four of the eight years. The first clutches laid each year tended to be heavier, and to produce more young, than subsequent clutches. An average of 77% of all (74) eggs hatched; of 17 eggs which failed to hatch, seven showed no development and nine disappeared. Breeding success (eggs to fledglings) was 39%, and mean annual productivity 0.8 young per pair.

The invertebrate food supply on the heath was measured; variations in supply from year to year were not correlated with variations in breeding success. Adult Stone-curlews may feed in other habitats at night; these feeding sites may be as important for the species' conservation as are areas of nesting habitat.

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Identification pitfalls and assessment problems

5 Scarlet Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*

The Scarlet Rosefinch has turned up more and more frequently in recent years. There was only one record in spring prior to 1963 (2nd April 1926, Fair Isle), but in the nine years up to 1971 there were 22 and in the following nine years there were 69. The totals in autumn for these last two periods were 114 and 306 respectively. The increase in spring records in particular suggests that sooner or later it will breed in Britain.

During 1968-80, a total of 554 was accepted by the Rarities Committee, and only 13 published as rejected. This indicates that it is an easy bird to identify and, indeed, the red head, breast and rump of the adult male distinguish it from all other British passerines except the obviously different crossbills *Loxia* and the considerably larger and much rarer Pine Grosbeak *Pinicola enucleator*. Most individuals that turn up in Britain are, however, juveniles in autumn and females or first-summer males in spring. In these plumages they are fairly nondescript, but, fortunately, are not 'even more sparrow-like than the female English Sparrow', as one North American

aviculturist would have us believe. A combination of characters should be looked for:

1. Fairly plain, brownish upperparts
2. Two pale wing bars, which are usually prominent, but which may disappear through abrasion in spring
3. Off-white underparts, with dense, fine, dark streaking normally confined to throat and breast, but sometimes extending to flanks and belly
4. Heavy conical bill
5. Large, beady dark eye set in plain brown face
6. Forked tail.

The call is 'twee-eek' reminiscent of that of a Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*. Several of the spring individuals in Britain have been heard singing: a simple, rather fluty, whistled song, basically 'swit-too swit-too', but each male varies his song considerably on this theme. Singing individuals lacking red coloration are likely to be first-summer males.

This species used to be commonly imported as a cage-bird, but India, the main source of supply, has drastically reduced its exports of birds very recently. Most imports have been of red males in spring, so it is likely that hardly any escapes are involved in the British records.

Some other rosefinches are occasionally imported and could cause confusion if they escaped. Most other *Carpodacus* species have a more obvious face pattern, with a contrasting supercilium, usually pink on adult males and pale in other plumages. The only regularly imported species, the House Finch *C. mexicanus* of the Americas, has a plain face in all plumages, except adult male. It is most easily distinguished from the Scarlet Rosefinch by generally heavier streaking on the underparts, extending to the undertail-coverts; also, the tail is only shallowly forked. This species has occurred three times in the Netherlands (*Dutch Birding* 1: 76-78), in circumstances suggesting ship-assisted crossings.

Other small red birds could be confused by inexperienced observers. Derek Goodwin (*Brit. Birds* 49: 339-349) mentioned an occasion when several people, field guides in hand, identified a Red Avadavat *Amandava amandava* as a Scarlet Rosefinch.

TIM INSKIPP

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'NUTHATCHES BREEDING AT LLANDUDNO. In view of the fact that up to the time of publishing my "Fauna of North Wales" no authentic occurrence of the Nuthatch (*Sitta caesia*) [*S. europaea*] on the north coast of Wales was known, it is interesting to note that a pair took up quarters in Gloddaeth Woods, Llandudno, early in the present year, and bred there later on. They were first observed by Mr. R. W. Jones, who showed me the nest-hole on May 10th. I heard the bird calling close by at the time. H. E. FORREST.' (*Brit. Birds* 2: 59, July 1908)

Mystery photographs



79 A small wader feeds along the shore of the reservoir: its shortish legs and bill, relatively small head and comparatively large eye indicate that it must be one of the smaller *Tringa* sandpipers, but which one?

Without wishing to flush the bird, we settle down to watch it through a telescope. The bird lacks the general black-and-white appearance of a Green Sandpiper *T. ochropus*, and a glance at the breast pattern confirms this: Green would have the white of the belly coming up into a high point in the centre of its breast, with the dark breast band extending farther down the sides. This feature is also shared by vagrant Solitary Sandpiper *T. solitaria*, which has more prominently spotted upperparts than Green; and Wood Sandpiper *T. glareola* is even more heavily spotted above than Solitary, and has longer legs.

The mystery wader has a most distinct breast pattern, with the white of the underparts coming up into a point before the bend of the wing, separating the wing from the breast band. Clearly it is one of the two species in the genus *Actitis*, closely related to *Tringa*. Through the telescope, we can see the rather obvious fine barring on the wing-coverts, and we are thinking along the lines of Spotted Sandpiper *A. macularia*; the legs are pale and could be yellowish (in the field, however, they might be muddy). We also note the rather long tail, projecting well beyond the tip of the folded wing; this also seems distinctly odd, but when did we last look closely at a Common Sandpiper *A. hypoleucos*?

Ageing is an important clue to identifying waders. The mystery bird is in immaculate fresh plumage; in early autumn, this means that it must be a juvenile, as adults then would have rather tatty, abraded or patchily moulted upperparts.

Juvenile Common as well as Spotted Sandpipers have varyingly prominent pale barring on the wing-coverts, although the bars are merely pale buffish on Common, making them less obviously contrasting than the whitish barring of a Spotted. The markedly long tail also helps, and points to the bird being a Common, rather than a Spotted Sandpiper (although beware missing or moulting tail feathers giving a rather short-tailed appearance to some Commons). The clinching point of the mystery bird is

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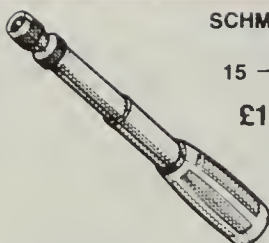
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75230 PARIS Cedex 05 if interested.

(D144)

the neat rows of pale buff notches around the fringes of the tertials. On Spotted Sandpiper there would be merely a greyish-white and dark sub-terminal tipping to each tertial, visible at close range through a telescope, and the relatively shorter tail would project only just beyond the wing tip, giving the bird a stumpy-reared appearance.

This juvenile Common Sandpiper was photographed in Cornwall by J. B. & S. Bottomley in September 1975. S. G. MADGE



133. Mystery photograph 80. Identify the species. Answer next month

Points of view

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

3 The presentation of statistics in ornithological papers

Many birdwatchers tell me that they find the statistical statements and diagrams that so frequently litter ornithological papers both unintelligible and irritating. I share this view. It cannot be denied that statistics is unintelligible if one has never studied it, but the issue goes deeper than this. If a fairly well thought out idea does indeed receive support from a statistical analysis, then this is a fascinating fact which should be mentioned somewhere in the resulting paper. Sometimes, however, a deep and healthy suspicion is aroused.

If statistics are to enter into a paper which aims to be widely read, then the techniques supporting statements in the text should be relegated to a short, small-print appendix, or placed minimally in brackets. I have every faith in the competence of dedicated biological statisticians and I and many others are quite ready to accept that they have done their homework correctly, so that their hieroglyphics and other paraphernalia can safely be left unpublished. The philosophy (or lack of it) underlying statistics is of far more interest to an average reader of intelligent literature than the all too pervasive presentation of far-flung arithmetical manipulations.

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Notes

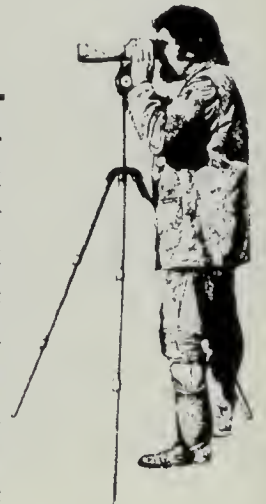
Great Crested Grebes continually harassing Black-necked and Red-necked Grebes

On 10th May 1962, at Corsham Lake, Wiltshire, a Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* was present with two resident pairs of Great Crested Grebes *P. cristatus*. As soon as the former came within 50m of a Great Crested, it was immediately driven away. During the next two hours, harassment intensified: on one occasion, all the Great Crested Grebes formed an 'alliance', one pair following the other, all about 3m apart; all four pursued the Black-necked over much of the lake. As it became dusk, harassment continued from one or other of the Great Crested Grebes. A third pair of Great Crested was left unmolested, but by the following morning both they and the Black-necked had left.

On 22nd February 1979, a Red-necked Grebe *P. grisegena* was on the lake. During the next two weeks, up to five Great Crested were also present, and the Red-necked freely associated with them, at times in a loose raft with up to four Great Crested. This situation changed when one pair of Great Crested, then a second, took up territories: whenever the Red-necked entered either of the territories, it was immediately driven off by both surface and underwater attack. With time, the aggression intensified: on 22nd March, the Red-necked was being harassed over the greater part of the lake; by the following day it had left.

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Dr K. E. L. Simmons has commented as follows: 'This is much as would be expected, especially regarding the Red-necked Grebe. Dr J. Fjeldså (1975, *Grebes*, Biol. Monographs, Copenhagen) stated that "The great crested grebe and the red-necked grebe cannot get on together. They often fight violently. Even though the red-necked grebe can defeat the larger great crested grebe in battle, it apparently prefers to lead a peaceful life and to find a lake of its own." ' EDS

Bittern swimming On 2nd April 1980, at Leighton Moss, Lancashire, I observed a male Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* swimming fairly slowly across a patch of open water. It was positioned very low in the water, with its head held up and its beak tilted skywards. On reaching reeds, it climbed out of the water and inflated as if to boom, but did not do so. It then walked into the reeds and was lost from sight.

C. J. BOOTH

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Michael Richards has commented as follows: 'I have not seen a Bittern swimming, but this incident does not altogether surprise me, as I have seen Grey Herons *Ardea cinerea* doing something that looks as if they are fishing out of their depth. I have seen Bitterns land in quite deep water at the edge of reeds, but this has not developed into anything similar to that observed by Mr Booth.' Swimming is not recorded for Bitterns in *BWP* vol. 1. EDS

Young Tufted Duck drowning Dr Stephanie J. Tyler's note on Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* trapped by vegetation (*Brit. Birds* 72: 551) recalled the following. On 16th July 1963, at Eversholt Lake, Bedfordshire, an adult Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula* with four half-grown young was swimming on the lake, and on my approach the family party dived. After a short period, they all surfaced and the young scurried off to join the adult, except one which had surfaced into a mass of unidentified waterweed: this became entangled around its head and over its bill and stopped it from surfacing completely. The duckling struggled, trying to rid itself of the weed; after a while, it became weaker and weaker, eventually ceased struggling, and drowned.

B. D. HARDING

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Role of male Golden Eagle during incubation Since 1970, the RSPB has guarded the eyrie sites of a pair of Golden Eagles *Aquila chrysaetos* in the Lake District, Cumbria. In 1971, an analysis was made of the share taken by the male in incubation. Incubation started on 26th March, or possibly 25th. One eaglet hatched on 3rd May and subsequently fledged. L. Brown and D. Amadon (1968, *Eagles, Hawks and Falcons of the World*) summarised the data on known incubation periods for this species: 43-45 days was usual in Scotland; 45 has been recorded for captive individuals; there is a record of 43 days in California; and, surprisingly, 35 days has been recorded many times in the United States. The total incubation period for the Lake District eagles of 38-39 days in 1971 was, therefore, unusually short for a British pair. Virtually all the literature on the species mentions that the male takes at least some part in incubation, although this has not been quantified in Britain. In 1971, the male participated on 32 of the 38 days; he accounted for about 6% of the whole incubation period, although there was considerable daily variation in his number of stints and amount of time on the nest. All the information recorded suggested that the female alone sat on the eggs during the hours of darkness, and that the male's spells were confined to the period between dawn and dusk. The male averaged 40 minutes per day, but on six days he totalled more than 180 minutes; on two of these six days, he sat for totals of 243 minutes (a spell of 189, and another of 54 minutes less

than two hours later) and 329 minutes (a spell of 187 minutes, and another of 142 less than three hours later). He did not incubate at all on days three and four, when the female sat alone through 48 hours of nearly continuous rain, nor on days 37 and 38 (immediately preceding hatching). For reasons not apparent, he did not incubate on days 18 or 29. The number of stints per day on the 32 days when the male incubated were: one stint on seven days; two on nine days; three on eight days; four on six days; and five on two days.

No particular pattern emerged for the male's share in incubation, in terms either of lengths or number of stints, or of times of day when he took over, although something may be learned of these points when data for other years are analysed. Contrary to expectations, there was no regular change-over in the early morning, nor do the log records indicate that more than two or three change-overs occurred owing to the male arriving with food. Indeed, it was usually impossible to deduce why a change-over had taken place at all. On many occasions, the male arrived with nest material and change-overs were often accompanied by much calling by both eagles. It was, in 1971, difficult to avoid the impression that this particular male 'had a great urge' to play his part in incubation: at least once he nudged the female off the eggs, and on another occasion the female failed completely to shift her mate when she returned to the nest.

On behalf of the RSPB, I must record my sincere thanks to the 1971 wardening team led by M. Kennedy, whose careful records made this brief analysis possible.

M. J. EVERETT

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Probable polygyny by Golden Eagle On 25th May 1980, I visited the traditional home range of a pair of Golden Eagles *Aquila chrysaetos* in northeast Inverness-shire. As I approached the nesting area, I saw two eagles and was quite sure that I would find the nest in use. When I reached the traditional eyrie (in a Scots pine *Pinus sylvestris* which can be viewed from the hillside above), I could see two eggs in the nest. The nest was obviously still in use, and contained fresh green Scots pine foliage. Two adult eagles were still present in the area, with one coming much closer than the other and occasionally calling; I was surprised that they were still showing so much attention to a nest containing eggs, which, in view of the date, I considered to be addled.

As I waited, I heard a young Golden Eagle call a short distance away and I discovered a new eyrie containing young Golden Eagles on a small wooded cliff only about 100m from the tree eyrie. The well built-up nest held two three-week-old chicks. There was fresh food in the nest, and the young were obviously thriving. A few weeks later, this nest was visited by two ornithologists who ringed the young; the addled eggs were still in the other nest, and they saw three adult Golden Eagles over the area. It seems likely that one female eagle laid and incubated successfully two eggs in the cliff eyrie, and the other female laid and unsuccessfully incubated two eggs in the tree eyrie.

The tree eyrie involved in this case contained four eggs in 1979, two of

which hatched. At the time, we considered that this was an exceptional clutch for Golden Eagle, but, in view of the activities in 1980, it now seems more likely that two female eagles laid eggs in the same nest in 1979. I can find no recorded reference to polygyny by Golden Eagles in the British Isles; Glutz von Blotzheim *et al.* (1971, *Handbuch der Vögel Mitteleuropas*, vol. 4) stated that casual bigamy by males may occur exceptionally in Europe. Bigamous males have now been recorded for several types of raptor, including two species of *Buteo*, which are taxonomically close to *Aquila*.

Postscript: in 1981, the main eyrie was storm damaged; a new, rather insecure, tree eyrie was built nearby, but the young were blown out by a gale not long after hatching; only two adult eagles were observed, and there was no sign of a third.

ROY DENNIS

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Golden Eagle laying replacement clutch On 25th March 1980, during RSPB and police investigations in Inverness-shire, two groups of egg-collectors were apprehended and the clutches of two pairs of Golden Eagles *Aquila chrysaetos*, each involving two eggs, were removed from cars searched near Fort Augustus. None of the eggs had been blown; two had been collected that day from an eyrie near Fort Augustus, and were successfully replaced the following day (subsequently, one young flew) by RSPB Highland staff members, Roger Broad and Dave Pierce.

The other two eggs had been taken from a nest in northeast Inverness-shire, probably on 23rd or 24th March. It was decided to put the eggs back; on 26th March, I went to the tree eyrie and replaced them in the nest. Clear signs in the snow below the tree confirmed that this was the eyrie that had been robbed, and the nest, although freshly built-up and lined, was empty.

I returned to the nest about three weeks later, but, like the first time, the eagles were absent, and there was no evidence that they had returned. Disappointed that they had moved out of the nesting area, we assumed that they had failed for the year. In late May, however, we realised that this pair was busy in another part of the home range, and, on 31st May, discovered a new nest containing a three-day-old chick and one egg, 3.5km from the original nest. The second egg did not hatch, but the chick thrived, was ringed on 27th June and eventually fledged. We visited two alternate eyries in this home range, but they were unused; the nearest three adjacent home ranges contained eagles with young.

Taking the incubation period for Golden Eagle as about 42 days, the replacement clutch was probably laid from about 16th April, about 21 days after the first clutch had been taken from the original nest. Dr I. Newton (1979, *Population Ecology of Raptors*) gave 19-29 days for replacement by White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*. I can find no recorded reference to repeat clutches by Golden Eagle in the British Isles. *The Handbook* states 'that this species sometimes repeats if first clutch is lost', while *BWP* states 'replacement clutch possible in event of egg loss but rare'. In 1981, the pair laid in one of the 1980 unused eyries and reared one young; the 1980 eyries were unused.

I am grateful to Roger Broad, Mike Everett and Dr Ian Newton for constructive comments on this and the previous note. ROY DENNIS

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Golden Eagle killing mobbing Carrion Crows The note on a Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* killing a mobbing Buzzard *Buteo buteo* (*Brit. Birds* 73: 536-537) prompts the following. I have seen one particular male Golden Eagle kill mobbing Carrion Crows *Corvus corone* on four occasions. The first two kills were in July 1980 and on 9th September 1982, when the eagle flight-rolled and struck at the crow as it approached too closely; the third, on 25th June 1980, when the pair of eagles was among a flock of about 50 crows; and the fourth, on 29th June 1980, when the same eagle killed a mobbing crow, which broke away only to be pursued and caught. I have also seen kills attempted by one eagle stooping at birds mobbing its mate, having deliberately gained height to do so. D. G. WALKER

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Pheasant eating carrion At 18.30 GMT on 3rd April 1980, while driving near Dinnet, Grampian, we disturbed a male Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus* which was repeatedly pecking at and apparently feeding on the remains of a rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus* which had been flattened on the road. We can find few previous references to Pheasants eating carrion.

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Among many food items listed for the Pheasant, *BWP* vol. 2 mentions 'Occasionally carrion'. Mrs Carmelia Christie has also commented that, in 15 years' experience in Pheasant-rearing, she quite often observed ten-week-old Pheasants in pens killing chicks from four weeks upwards, pulling out their entrails and eating the flesh; this occurred when the older Pheasants were apparently 'bored'. EDS

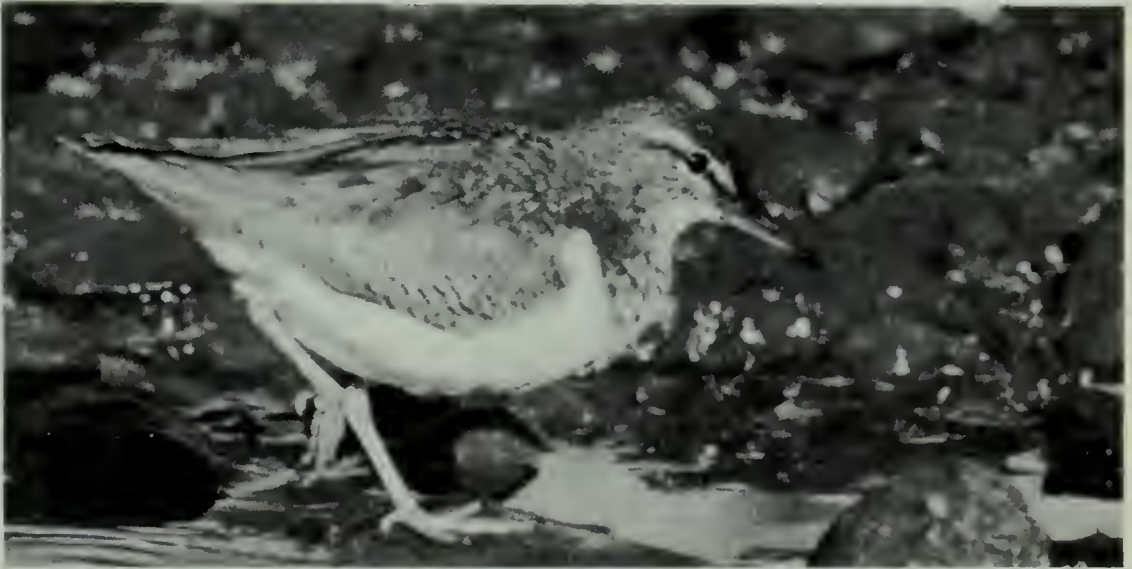
Woodcock catching flying insects from the ground Shortly after dusk on 15th August 1978, P. Jepson and I were driving along a track through woodland at Skipwith Common, near York, North Yorkshire, when we stopped to watch a Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* in the car headlights. It was momentarily dazzled, but soon started feeding among muddy puddles in the track, probing the soft ground while slowly wagging its rear end. We watched for several minutes, and commented in amazement when it jumped some centimetres into the air to snap at a small flying insect. On several occasions, it snapped as a small insect flew past, and caught a few in this manner; and on at least three occasions it jumped with partially opened wings to snap at them. S. C. MADGE

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P. J. Olney has commented: 'I have never seen Woodcock feeding in this manner and I do not know of any records in the literature.' EDS

Jizz of Spotted Sandpiper During March 1980, I observed a number of Spotted Sandpipers *Actitis macularia* in Argentina. I was surprised to find that they had a rather different 'jizz' from that of Common Sandpiper *A. hypoleucos*.

Fundamentally, the difference lies in the angle at which the tail is held: Spotted often carries its tail at a higher angle than does Common and, with the relatively shorter tail of Spotted, this gives the bird a peculiar, flat-backed appearance. The rather pot-bellied shape of Spotted is accentuated by the resulting high angle of the undertail-coverts, a feature which, together with the flat back, gives the bird an inverted triangle appearance, unlike that of Common (plates 134 & 135). This jizz is sufficiently different



134. Adult winter Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia*, USA, December 1980 (Kenneth Gardiner)

from the more elongated posture of Common to suggest provisional identity at distances where plumage details are difficult to discern. Specific identification based upon jizz alone is fraught with danger, as both species are habitual tail-waggers and may fluff-up or retract their feathers, thus altering their body-shapes drastically at times. This jizz feature may be

135. Juvenile Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*, Cornwall, September 1981 (J. H. Johns)



useful, however, in helping an observer to spot this species at long ranges, before a confirming better view is obtained.

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Behaviour of gulls in hailstorm On 24th March 1980, on Islay, Strathclyde, I was watching gulls feeding in a pasture field. At 15.20 GMT, there were 41 Common Gulls *Larus canus*, ten Black-headed *L. ridibundus*, three Herring *L. argentatus* and a Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus*. At 15.35, a hailstorm suddenly commenced and all gulls stopped feeding: they stood facing the wind, which I had earlier estimated at force 3 or 4; at the height of the storm, a Common and a Black-headed Gull angled their bills upwards. At 14.25 hours on 26th March, at the same locality, I was watching a similar group of 50 Common, eight Black-headed, eight Herring and four Lesser Black-backed Gulls. The Herring Gulls were rummaging among cow-pats, the others were walk-picking as usual, and the wind was again force 3 or 4 from the south. At 14.55, there was another hailstorm. All the gulls stopped feeding and stood facing the wind; then, during the heaviest hail, all the Common and Black-headed Gulls aligned their bills with the driving hail; after the hail, there was much preening and, as the following rain slackened, further walk-picking was resumed by many. R. E. ELLIOTT

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Cuckoo taken by Buzzard On 14th May 1975, on moorland near Exford, Somerset, PRKD was watching an adult female Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* from about 350 m which had been perched on a hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* on one side of a steep narrow coombe from 13.12 GMT and was evidently waiting to lay an egg in a nearby nest of a Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*. From about 13.50 hours, a Buzzard *Buteo buteo* began soaring in the vicinity, and at about 14.10 it alighted on another hawthorn about 300 m from the Cuckoo on the other side of the coombe. At 14.36 hours, it took off on a low glide towards the Cuckoo and, using its talons, picked the motionless Cuckoo off the bush; the latter made no attempt to escape. The raptor carried its prey about 50 m to a grassy mound, from where PRKD (who was trying to observe the Cuckoo laying) chased it off, in the hope that the Cuckoo would be released. The Buzzard, however, carried its prey a further 600 m to a grassy bank. Later in the day, PRKD collected many feathers and one foot of the Cuckoo from this spot. Although perhaps not unusual, reports of predation on free-flying Cuckoos are uncommon; the Cuckoo's lack of escape reaction is also of much interest.

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Little Owl raiding Starling's nest Recent publications on the Little Owl *Athene noctua* (*Brit. Birds* 72: 594-595; 73: 167-182) prompt the following. At about 06.30 GMT on 2nd June 1979, near Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire, my attention was captured by a noisy hubbub of alarm calls of Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris*. Seconds later, a pair of Starlings appeared in hot pursuit of a Little

Owl with a substantial prey item in its talons. The owl disappeared along a nearby hedgerow, and the Starlings returned. Ten minutes later, a Little Owl reappeared, flying the opposite way. Starling alarms broke out again, so I followed the sounds, and found the owl perched in a tree top, mobbed by the Starlings, but seeming to ignore them. After about a minute, the owl flew straight down to a hole about 6m up in the trunk of a young oak *Quercus*, where it spent about two minutes struggling to force itself in; unable to get much more than its head in, it eventually gave up and flew off along the lane without prey. I climbed up to the hole and found inside a Starling's nest containing four unharmed young about five days old. It seems reasonable to assume that the owl's first victim was one of the same brood which had been near enough to the entrance to be seized; with the brood size reduced, the remaining nestlings were probably just out of reach (a situation familiar to ringers of nestlings in cavity nests).

Hibbert-Ware (1936-37, 'Report of the Little Owl Food Inquiry', *Brit. Birds* 31: 162-167, 205-229, 249-264) recorded the remains of 'young starlings' in several Little Owl nests and larders, but implied that these were fledged juveniles. She briefly mentioned records of two raids on Starling nests, but regarded nest-raiding in general as exceptional. I have, however, found freshly killed nestling Starlings in several Little Owl nests during recent survey work on farmland birds of prey, and believe that this habit may be more frequent than Hibbert-Ware indicated. Young Starling's would certainly provide a useful food source at a time when Little Owls have their own young to feed, and one that they should be able to exploit easily and efficiently in view of their own cavity-nesting habits; not all Starling holes have narrow entrances.

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Dipper killing trout after river pollution Recent studies have shown Dippers *Cinclus cinclus* feeding almost exclusively on macro-invertebrates, especially the larger and more sluggish types (Creutz 1966, Shaw 1979), and correlations have been shown between the species' breeding behaviour and the invertebrate bottom fauna of different types of river (da Prato & Langslow 1976). There seems to be little direct evidence of fish killing and even fish ova are not normally available to Dippers (Jones & King 1952), but the species has often been persecuted by keepers on trout and salmon streams (Bannerman 1954).

On 27th September 1979, I was investigating the source of a pollution that had been detected during routine biological sampling of the macro-invertebrates in the Gifford Water, East Lothian, normally a clean, fast-flowing river with a rich bottom fauna that provides good conditions for the resident Dippers. This pollution caused the disappearance of nearly all invertebrates from approximately 6km of the river, but did not kill the fish life; for some days, however, the brown trout *Salmo trutta* appeared to be sluggish in their movements. I noticed a Dipper banging a trout on a rock in the middle of the river. As I approached, it flew off, leaving the fish on the rock; the trout was 7.6 cm long, with no obvious marks of damage or disease apart from the Dipper's bill marks directly behind the gills. I laid the fish

back on the rock, and later saw that the Dipper had returned and pecked at it. Even an experienced ornithologist would probably have concluded that the bird had caught the fish under natural conditions: the flow and appearance of the water were normal and there was no discoloration, dead invertebrates or dead fish (which often characterise pollution incidents). It would clearly be unwise to conclude from this one incident that Dippers take fish only under unnatural conditions, but it provides an interesting example of a situation where a 'predator' could acquire a reputation for preying on a game species; even a sympathetic keeper would probably have concluded that the Dipper was taking fish from choice, rather than necessity.

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House Sparrows sunning in glass jars On three consecutive sunny days in July 1978, in my parents' garden in Swanley, Kent, I observed a number of House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* indulging in an unusual form of sunning activity. Seven 1-lb (0.45-kg) glass jars, four on their side, lay in full sunlight; about midday sparrows gathered to dust, and occasionally one entered a jar and sunned; in each such case the sparrow sat on its tarsi facing the neck of the jar, its mandibles apart as if panting. This happened six times, some sessions including a few minutes' break between periods inside the jar. Four occasions involved females, and two males; immatures, although present, were not seen to enter the jars. Preening occurred after the sessions, but it was frequent in sparrows which had not sunned and was no more intense in those that had.

LAURENCE N. ROSE

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Dr K. E. L. Simmons has commented as follows: 'Were they sunning? I have never seen a House Sparrow adopt a full sunning position (as by, for example, Blackbird *Turdus merula* or Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*): never more than droop the wings and fluff up the feathers in a sitting position. They seem, then, really to be *basking*, i.e. warming themselves. The bill-open posture in this case indicates attempts at cooling! All very puzzling.' Eds

Letters

The 'yellow webs' of Wilson's Storm-petrel While it is an interesting idea that Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* may use its supposedly yellow webs to lure or frighten krill (*Brit. Birds* 73: 385-387), perhaps before this is quoted widely as an accepted fact it should be pointed out that available evidence points in another direction. For example, in an account of the behaviour of storm-petrels (Hydrobatidae) in their winter quarters off Guyana, Rear Admiral G. S. Ritchie (*Sea Swallow* 18: 64-71) reported that three observers saw a shark stick its head out of the water and catch a passing petrel, and that one of five petrels that came aboard lacked a foot. I have not handled a live Wilson's, but the webs of another of the species quoted (73: 385), the White-faced Storm-petrel *Pelagodroma marina*, are in life not yellow but pale pink, and its whole foot is almost transparent; if this

also applies to Wilson's, it could help explain why the 'famous' yellow webs seen in skins are less conspicuous at sea. It also seems possible that the evolution of translucent webs may make the feet of those storm-petrels which show the greatest development of a pattering type of flight (and also winter in areas in the tropics which have many marine predators) more difficult to see against the light.

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The use of 'storm-petrel' rather than 'petrel' for these species is at Dr Bourne's request, and does not imply a change in *British Birds*' editorial policy. Eds

Identifying Serins Since the publication of our short paper on this topic (*Brit. Birds* 75: 547-553) some interesting features have come to light. Having no field experience of the African species of the genus *Serinus*, we relied on the literature, and we are grateful to both F. M. Gauntlett and P. A. Gregory who have written to put us right on some misleading points over the identification of Yellow-rumped Canary *S. atrogularis*. The southern races tend to have their throats more mottled with black than the northern populations, hence it is the latter which are most likely to be confused with Serin *S. serinus*; in the field there would be no appreciable size difference from Serin, although PAG states that it is even 'dumplier' in jizz. Furthermore, the bird depicted in fig. 1 (bird e) shows too strong a supercilium and malar stripe for this species.

We stress that our paper was not intended to be comprehensive on the identification of escaped *Serinus* species; the intention was to draw attention to the problem by showing a few examples of easily confused species and to emphasise the importance of specific features to bear in mind when faced by a 'funny little finch' with a yellow rump. D. S. Flumm (*in litt.*) has suggested that one of the greatest pitfalls arises when a juvenile Siskin *Carduelis spinus* fails to show the yellow flashes at the base of the tail, and with this we whole-heartedly concur. Finally, we should like to point out that not only does the problem of escaped *Serinus* finches lie with identifying Serin in Britain but also with Citril Finch *S. citrinella*; escaped Yellow-fronted



136. Serin *Serinus serinus*, Spain, April 1980 (Bertil Breije)

Canaries *S. mozambicus* can also suggest this species, as shown by one or two claims recently received by the Rarities Committee.

Unfortunately, fig. 1 in our paper was incorrectly captioned by the printers. The correct caption should read: 'Adult males of (a) Serin *Serinus serinus*, (b) juvenile Siskin *Carduelis spinus*, (c) Yellow-fronted Canary *S. mozambicus*, (d) Canary *S. canaria* and (e) Yellow-rumped Canary *S. atrogularis*.'

D. J. HOLMAN and S. C. MADGE

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Undiscovered field characters A recent blurb (its place of publication shall be nameless) on the field characters of the Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus* informed me that it is a long-winged bird. A more helpful statement would have indicated that the Storm Petrel is, in fact, rather straighter- and much shorter-winged than the Leach's Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*. In this, it is closely approached by the Wilson's Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*, witness the marvellous illustrations in *Brit. Birds* (72: 330-333). The first reference noted above displays the loose nonsense still being written about field characters. The second exemplifies the many opportunities left to the skilled, disciplined observer and the adventurous photographer to sharpen our perception of specific character and behaviour.

I should like to draw attention to those areas which, judging by the gaps which have become evident to me while writing the field characters sections of the first four volumes of *BWP*, are partially unexplored and hence underexploited. In no particular order, they are:

1. Specific character (stemming from shared familial and generic relationships but usually made individual by size, structure and particular actions, often combining into a mean image which is very distinctive even at long range and varied only in seasonal display attitudes).
2. Flight action (clearly associated with weight and power, wing- and tail-shape and structure, and certain feeding actions, often specifically diagnostic in non-passerines).
3. Carriage and gait (derived from weight distribution, leg length and certain feeding actions, particularly helpful in generic separations).
4. Feeding actions (closely associated with food niche, bare-part structure and use, again useful in familial and generic separations).
5. Other movements loosely describable as displacement actions (exemplified by tail-cocking, wing-flicking, head-bobbing and the like, and clearly very important as identity signals among several passerine genera which share a high degree of common appearance).
6. Ventral and underwing patterns (often more visible than is thought, including *real* characters stemming from colour and pattern and *less real* marks caused by translucency and wear, often important in waders and gulls).
7. Escape tactics (associated with habitat preferences and feeding behaviour).

8. Interactions with other species (particularly when threatened with predation or during competition for food niches).
9. Variations in individual distance in gregarious species (particularly in flight or when roosting and feeding).
10. Flock configurations (particularly in ducks and waders).

It would be so useful if observers—who nowadays travel almost throughout the Holarctic—would seek additional and confirmatory field characters, both when in the field and retrospectively in their notebooks.

D. I. M. WALLACE

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Announcement

BB badges We can now supply *BB* lapel badges free of charge to anyone who sends a stamped, self-addressed envelope to BB Badges, c/o P. J. Grant, 14 Heathfield Road, Ashford, Kent TN24 8QD. We hope that all badge-wearing *BB*-readers will obtain one and become walking advertisements for *British Birds*!

News and comment

Robin Prytherch and Mike Everett

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

Northumberland's guided walks The Northumberland National Park is once again offering a wide-ranging programme of guided Discovery Walks and Trails. Whether on the coast, or within the National Park itself, they are designed not only for beginners to natural history, or the merely curious holidaymaker, but also to give more expert naturalists a chance to see and learn about parts of this as-yet-unspoilt county that they might otherwise overlook in a limited stay. Many of these walks provide excellent outings for all the family and visitors are encouraged to contribute their observations and experiences.

Birds feature prominently in the programme, including a number of walks on Holy Island and at other coastal venues. You can study 'Birds and Botany' in the National Park, or take a boat ride on the new Kielder Reservoir, the largest man-made lake in Europe. Other subjects include geology,

archaeology, entomology, local history and seashore life, and you can even go on a 'Toadstool Trail'.

Anyone interested should contact the Guided Walks Officer, Northumberland National Park and Countryside Department, Eastburn, South Park, Hexham, Northumberland. (*Contributed by Wendy Dickson*)

'Oryx' The recent and rather belated appearance of the new-look issue of *Oryx* for January 1983 is none the less welcome. Now slightly larger and with different binding, it is much easier to handle. The design and layout are also new, but the style and contents follow a similar pattern to before. The 'Briefly . . .' column is an amazing and valuable collection of abstracts of reports in journals and newspapers on a wide range of national and international natural history and conservation topics, and always includes

a number of ornithological items. The main articles are varied (reports on National Parks or studies on single species) and there are also details and progress reports of the various projects initiated or supported by the Fauna and Flora Preservation Society (which publishes *Oryx* quarterly in conjunction with Blackwell Scientific Publications Ltd: details from them at PO Box 88, Oxford).

Human imitation of bird sound In the current issue of *Recorded Sound* (83: 57-73), a wide-ranging paper by Jeffery Boswall and Robert Barton discusses the many and varied means by which, and reasons why, human beings mimic birds in both primitive and modern societies. It is surprising that field ornithologists have not employed much more widely the techniques of early and contemporary hunters for luring birds into view; and that more European birders do not 'pish' and 'squeak' as do really skilled Americans such as Kenneth C. Parkes. Squeaking is the more effective of the two, but persistence and concealment are more important than even most American birdwatchers appreciate; and, despite a contrary view, there is no valid evidence that squeaking works less well outside the Nearctic!

Human mimicry of birds may be vocal or instrumental; also the reproduction off tape of the sound of a bird is to be sensibly regarded as a modern equivalent.

Mimicry in the field may be designed to get the bird to give away its position by answering, or to lure the bird towards the mimic. Alternatively, it may be to scare or disperse birds. In the first two cases, the mimic may wish to kill (for food, sport or science), trap (for killing, live capture or ringing), identify, census or otherwise study, photograph or tape-record a bird. In the third case, the mimic may wish to scare off birds that are his food competitors or irritants: those that foul buildings with their droppings, for example.

Other imitation of birds is directed not at birds but at fellow humans for reasons of primitive ritual, creating new words (onomatopoeia), or enhancing the realism of an

automaton (TV's *Going for a Song* stuffed bird and the cuckoo clock).

Reprints, combined with a 27-page discography by Peter Copeland of 174 discs and cassettes of human imitation of bird sound issued 1891-1982, price £2, is available from Birdswell, Wraxall, Bristol BS19 1JZ.

'The Living Night' Composers of music are often stimulated by the natural sounds around us, and not surprisingly it is birds that feature prominently in such products of the composers' minds. The information is usually gathered by direct contact with nature, but there is a recent example of experience, as it were, by proxy. The late Elizabeth Lutyens, an eminent British composer, heard the broadcast last year of a natural history programme in the series 'The Living Night' and was apparently so moved by the natural sounds (it was set on the Dyfed coast and featured the beautiful roost calls of Curlews *Numenius arquata* and also fox *Vulpes vulpes*) that she decided to write a piece. The first that John Harrison, producer of the programme, heard of this was when he was asked if the title could be used for the music. So, the first performance of the musical version of 'The Living Night' is due during this year's Bath Festival in June.

New bird report The first official *Huntingdon and Peterborough Bird Report*, for 1981, has just appeared. It covers the old county of Huntingdon and Peterborough and represents a break-away from the area covered by the Cambridge Bird Club. Copies of the report (£1.70 including p & p) can be obtained from Martin Coates, 10 Latham Avenue, Orton Longueville, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire.

BIY The *British Birds* editorial office receives letters from almost every country in the world, addressed in a great variety of ways. One of the most original ever, however, must be that used by Dirk Moerbeek when sending his entry for the latest competition for 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' (see below).



Roger Tory Peterson tour Dr and Mrs Peterson were in Britain for ten days in April; RTP gave three lectures for the RSPB. The first was at Warwick, part of the RSPB Members' Weekend—bursting at the seams with 1,200 people, most of whom wanted (and got) books signed by Peterson, Mountfort and Hollom. The interest—almost reverence—was enormous. Guy Mountfort gave a forceful talk on world conservation problems; Heather Angel an insight into the world of the natural history photographer; and David Streeter looked in depth at hedges. Wildlife art included notable selections of work by Cusa, Gillmor, Hilary Burn, David Mead, Bruce Pearson and Frederick J. Watson; and of course there was all the usual RSPB business and staff speakers. Typically, the weekend—with 670 residents and hundreds more visitors—went smooth as silk and was thoroughly enjoyed by all.

A small reception for RTP was quite a historic gathering—Peterson, Mountfort, Hollom, Hosking, Conder, Barber, Hancock, Prestt, Crudass, Parslow, Gillmor, *et al.*, all in fine form. Subsequent Peterson lectures—on the evolution of the field guide, and wildlife in the Antarctic—were given at York and Guildford, each with busy signing sessions and equally obvious respect and admiration for Roger, who gave a fascinating insight into the early days of his field guide concept. It is perhaps a very arrogant comment, but it is sad that a few people seemed much happier to look at pretty pictures than to listen to what the great man had to say and, at all locations, the keen birdwatchers—who one would think would be the most eager to listen—mostly didn't bother to turn up!

Roger was able to visit one of his favourite areas—the Farnes—but bad weather prevented much else in the field. He proved eager to seek out new ideas, constructive criticism and suggestions for field-guide improvements, delighted by kind reviews, but upset by vitriolic criticism from reviewers who have lost sight of the reason for his guide books—'simplification rather than amplification' as he puts it. Though forthright in his views about his own guides, Roger is very impressed by the more detailed books in which Britain has taken a notable lead—notably on raptors, gulls and seabirds—and highly complimentary towards other artists (but not all!).

He and his wife, Virginia, engendered respect and affection wherever they went; he is a remarkably modest, fascinating man, full of reminiscences, naturally, but also very up-to-date and progressive in the fields of identification and conservation alike. Roger was awarded the gift of Life Fellowship of the RSPB at Guildford and, typically, was thoroughly delighted by it. He left for a 24-hour bird twitch in California, then a trip to Alaska, followed by a hefty programme of painting and writing—enough to finish most of those 50 years his junior! (*Contributed by R. A. Hume*)

'BB' subscribers arrested In mid June, two well-known British birdwatchers, Simon Albrecht and Dennis Buisson, were arrested in Turkey on charges relating to 'use of binoculars and cameras within a military area' close to the Greek border. We hope that this misunderstanding will have been sorted out by now.

Recent reports

R. A. Hume and K. Allsopp

These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records

Dates in this report refer to April except where stated otherwise.

Cold air from the north, brought in by cold north to west winds, bringing unsettled





cyclonic weather, persisted until 12th. A few days of settled anticyclonic weather followed, with slowly rising temperatures. Warmer southerly air arrived on 16th, but conditions then became very unsettled as the cold northerlies again returned to dominate the scene. Until the end of the month, there was wet weather, with damp southwesterlies as low pressure systems stayed close to the country. All in all, it was not a very spring-like month, but such cold, wet conditions seem to be the norm nowadays. Even so, there were some early summer migrant arrivals and some places recorded a very good month for migrants, notably Spurn Bird Observatory (Humberside) which had the best April for at least 18 years, perhaps ever, for numbers and variety of summer visitors.

Waterside birds

A **Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax* stayed at Fingringhoe Wick (Essex) from at least 16th to 20th, and **Purple Herons** *Ardea purpurea* turned up at Westbere (Kent), at Walberswick (Suffolk) on 16th and, less predictably, at Ditchford Gravel-pits (Northamptonshire) on 22nd. **Spoonbills** *Platalea leucorodia* made quite a good showing, with six in Norfolk, four at Pitsford Reservoir (Northamptonshire) on 11th and four at Selsey Bill (West Sussex) on 12th, with a fifth at nearby Sidlesham Ferry and Pagham Harbour; then one at Spurn on 16th and 17th, and another at Minsmere (Suffolk) on

23rd and 24th. **Glossy Ibises** *Plegadis falcinellus* included the usual two at Elmley and Stodmarsh in Kent, but also one at Ballycotton (Co. Cork) all month. A **Crane** *Grus grus* visited Durkadale (Orkney) on 30th, and equally huge and impressive visitors were **White Storks** *Ciconia ciconia* at Denton Reservoir, near Grantham (Lincolnshire) on 6th, at Holm (Orkney) on 19th, and at Potton (Bedfordshire) on 5th May, the latter reported to RSPB staff at The Lodge 3km away, but not until after it had flown away!

Waders included one or two interesting reports, notably three **Black-winged Stilts** *Himantopus himantopus* which arrived at Marazion (Cornwall), called and displayed, and promptly left again at the end of the month. The first **Stone-curlew** *Burhinus oedipnemus* to be recorded in Glamorgan since 1941 turned up at Barry (South Glamorgan) on 16th; **Whimbrels** *Numenius phaeopus* moved through in the middle of the month, for example in Northamptonshire around 22nd and 23rd. Nearctic birds included a **Greater Yellowlegs** *Tringa melanoleuca*—always a great rarity—at Blennerville (Co. Kerry) from 16th to 17th—but probably from at least the previous November. A **Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos* was at Ballycotton from 16th to 18th. Most amazing was another **Hudsonian Godwit** *Limosa haemastica* at Blacktoft Sands (Humberside) from 26th. The September 1981 bird returned? If not, the coincidence is remarkable.

Seabirds

The famous **Black-browed Albatross** *Diomedea melanophrys* returned for another hopeful—but no doubt frustrating—vigil at Hermaness (Shetland); taken for granted now, perhaps, but still a fascinating phenomenon. A **Little Shearwater** *Puffinus assimilis* passed Portland Bill (Dorset) on about 5th. **Red-throated Divers** *Gavia stellata* included up to 150 at Spurn during 1st to 4th. Two lucky people saw the very rare sight of a live **Brünnich's Guillemot** *Uria lomvia* in British waters in Shetland on 5th. At Selsey Bill on 10th, there was a tremendous passage of 916 **Sandwich Terns** *Sterna sandvicensis* moving east, but numbers of other terns were unremarkable. Gulls continued to force their presence onto observers' attentions, however, with the first Orkney **Ring-billed Gull** *Larus delawarensis*, at Stromness on 27th March, and others at Southport (Lancashire) on 22nd March, at Aberystwyth

(Dyfed) on 13th, at Blennerville on 17th and at Radipole Lake (Dorset) on 23rd. Records of this species here continue to reflect the big increase in numbers on the east coast of North America and the bird is destined to be a plague for the British and Irish rarities committees if occurrences carry on at this rate! **Iceland Gulls** *L. glaucoides* declined from their earlier high total, but ten at Blennerville on 16th added to the already exceptional picture in Ireland. **Mediterranean Gulls** *L. melanocephalus* were noted in the usual places—not very long ago every report would have been given full treatment—but ten at Borth (Dyfed), with one or two more nearby, was very unusual, and one at Musselburgh (East Lothian) on 2nd added to the growing number of northerly reports. Enough of gulls—perhaps the summer will give us a break.

Wildfowl

In North Uist (Outer Isles) on 24th March, a **Snow Goose** *Anser caerulescens*, standing a better chance of being wild than most, and a **Canada Goose** *Branta canadensis* of one of the smaller races (making it a very good bird) were located at Balranald. **Brent Geese** *B. bernicla* included a small but exceptional group for northwest England: 21 at South Walney (Cumbria) all month. Nearctic ducks still maintained a most noteworthy presence: **Ring-necked Ducks** *Aythya collaris* at Tophill Low (Humberside) on 7th and at Insh Marshes (Grampian); both an **American Wigeon** *Anas americana* and a drake **Teal** *A. crecca* of the distinctive race *carolinensis* at Elmley (Kent); other 'green-winged' Teals at Minsmere on 16th and in Shetland from March onwards, and the much rarer **Blue-winged Teal** *A. discors* at Cemlyn, Anglesey (Gwynedd), from 13th to 16th March. **Surf Scoters** *Melanitta perspicillata*, apart from those in Scotland already reported (which continued their stay), included five drakes and perhaps three ducks at Ballinesker (Co. Wexford) from 14th onwards: a fantastic group.

Birds of prey

A **Black Kite** *Milvus migrans* was in Kent on 22nd. **White-tailed Eagles** *Haliaeetus albicilla* visited Orkney and Shetland, with two or three in the former group, including wing-tagged birds (from the re-introduction attempt) and untagged ones; whether introduced or not, they must look marvellous. A

Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus* was noted on South Uist (Outer Isles) on 7th. Two **Rough-legged Buzzards** *Buteo lagopus* stayed all month in Orkney. Wandering **Marsh Harriers** *Circus aeruginosus* turned up to excite local observers in Anglesey, at Oxwich (West Glamorgan) on 15th, at Preston Capes (Northamptonshire) on 21st, and at Spurn on 23rd. Spurn also reported its earliest ever **Montagu's Harrier** *C. pygargus*, adding elegance to the scene on 24th. An **Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* visited Fleet Pond (Hampshire) from 6th to 8th; another flew over Wallington (Surrey) on 15th, and one visited Fair Isle (Shetland) on 25th, after a **Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus* there on 22nd.

Southern migrants

Spurn recorded a good month, as already mentioned; at Portland and Weymouth (Dorset) there was an overnight fall on 16th/17th, whereas the noticeable arrival in the centre of England (Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire for instance) was about 19th. These inland arrivals included a few



Pied Flycatchers *Ficedula hypoleuca* and **Redstarts** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* and even the odd **Ring Ouzel** *Turdus torquatus*. At Lodmoor (Dorset) on 17th there was a singing **Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita* of the Spanish race *ibericus*. In Scilly (Cornwall) a **Bonelli's Warbler** *P. bonelli* appeared at the end of the month, as did a **Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava* of the black-headed race *feldegg*. Yellow Wagtails were unusually numerous at Spurn with 37 on 28th and 30th, including three of the blue-headed nominate race; numbers of **Wheatears** *Oenanthe oenanthe* there were a record for April, with 80 on 16th and 53 on 17th; they are eclipsed, nevertheless, by 500 on Fair Isle on 8th and 250 on 30th. Ring Ouzels were also unusually numerous at Spurn, and **Willow Warblers**

P. trochilus also broke all April records there, with 80 on 17th, and **Lesser Whitethroats** *Sylvia curruca* included the earliest ever on 23rd. Both **Wryneck** *Jynx torquilla* and **Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia turtur* made their earliest ever appearances at Spurn, too, on 21st and 23rd respectively. A **Bluethroat** *Luscinia svecica* at Minsmere on 7th was also early, as was a **Spotted Flycatcher** *Muscicapa striata* at Nacton (Suffolk) on 9th. There were **Alpine Swifts** *Apus melba* at Kenfig Pool (Mid Glamorgan) on 11th and at Barn Elms Reservoir (Greater London) for three



days late in the month. A **Hoopoe** *Upupa epops* was reported from Dungeness (Kent) on 16th—scarce this spring? Unusually early was a **Great Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* at Cliffe (Kent) on 17th. Exciting things began to happen in Scilly in early May: five **Bee-eaters** *Merops apiaster*—increasing to seven—on St Agnes from 4th, and a **Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius senator* on Bryher, also on 4th.

Late-stayers

A **Richard's Pipit** *Anthus novaeseelandiae* remained near Blackpool (Lancashire) until 29th, but even more exciting must have been the discovery of that supreme late-autumn gem, a **Pallas's Warbler** *Phylloscopus proregulus* at nearby Kirkham (Lancashire) late in the month—finishing off this report with more headstripes and wingbars on one bird than in the rest of it put together. Such an event is unprecedented, but recalls a 1970 Dusky Warbler *P. fuscatus* in May at the Calf of Man, which was later found dying in Ireland, in December 1970; perhaps it is not surprising that a Pallas's should survive a mild winter after a big autumn influx.

Latest news

In the first half of June, the best bird was undoubtedly a **Needle-tailed Swift** *Hirundapus caudacutus* in Orkney. Scotland also produced the only three **Broad-billed Sandpipers** *Limicola falcinellus* of the spring, one at Stranraer (Dumfries & Galloway) and two in Aberlady Bay (Lothian), and a **Red-flanked Bluetail** *Tarsiger cyanurus* was reported from the Isle of May (Fife). An **Eagle Owl** *Bubo bubo*, which allowed observers to approach it closely, stayed for some time at Tonbridge (Kent). Norfolk rarities included **Roller** *Coracias garrulus* at Thetford, **Rose-coloured Starlings** *Sturnus roseus* at Holme and Hickling, and **Purple Heron** at Hickling. In Suffolk, there was a **Purple Heron**, near Lakenheath, and a **Wilson's Phalarope** *Phalaropus tricolor* at Minsmere.

Reviews

Handbook of the Birds of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa: the Birds of the Western Palearctic. Volume III: Waders to Gulls. Edited by Stanley Cramp, K. E. L. Simmons, Duncan J. Brooks, N. J. Collar, Euan Dunn, Robert Gillmor, P. A. D. Hollom, Robert Hudson, E. M. Nicholson, M. A. Ogilvie, P. J. S. Olney, C. S. Roselaar, K. H. Voous, D. I. M. Wallace, Jan Wattel and M. G. Wilson. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1983. 913 pages; 105 colour plates; numerous line drawings. £49.50.

With the publication of this third volume, *BWP*, as the work is now universally known, can be more clearly seen as the monumental and utterly indispensable undertaking it is. Volume 3 deals with 112 species in 913 pages, fully 25% more pages than Volume 1, the bulkiest volume previously published. Yet the editors admit that the summaries of order, families and sub-families have had to be reduced in scope, and that the accounts of terns, skimmers and auks have been held over to the next volume.

My initial reaction was that the work, like Topsy, had just growed and growed, and I feared that the editors (who have also grown from 11 to 16) and publishers might run out of steam.

Yet there is a strong case for the length of the accounts of certain species. The Herring Gull (22 pages), Black-headed Gull (20 pages), Oystercatcher (19 pages) and Lapwing (16 pages) have all been widely studied. The account of the Herring Gull is by far the longest of any species account in the three volumes published to date and is very comprehensive. The account of diet, for example, comprises two and a half pages of text, summarising studies from Britain, West Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Yugoslavia, Sardinia, Turkey and various places in the Soviet Union. Social pattern and behaviour are dealt with in five and a half pages, and the plumages of the various groups in just over three pages. These seem justified by the wealth of study that has gone into the Herring Gull; indeed, one might quibble at the shortage of comparative material from the United States.

In most cases the accounts are written by one or more of the editors. 'Field Characters', for example, are by D. I. M. Wallace and 'Distribution' and 'Populations' by Stanley Cramp, but in some cases accounts have been compiled by acknowledged experts on particular species or topics. The movements of Knots and Dunlins are described by M. W. Pienkowski; the food of the Dunlin is based on an outline by R. T. Holmes; the food of the Redshank is described by J. D. Goss-Custard. The involvement of these authorities strengthens the text and at times, such as with P. G. H. Evans's contribution on the food of the Kittiwake, makes available a great deal of previously unpublished material. Hopefully, this practice will be extended in future.

The book, while enormous and authoritative, is not faultless. Once again, the binding provided by Oxford University Press is hopelessly inadequate for the number of pages. After a couple of weeks, the spine of the review copy is showing signs of strain, and I can see it needing repair long before the final volume appears. Some of the plates I found disappointing. Cusa's gulls are reminiscent of his ducks in Volume 1: feather detail, so important in a book of this sort, is difficult to discern on most birds. On plate 80, the water colour appears to have run rather astray on the heads of the gulls. D. I. M. Wallace's drawings of waders are well known to and much admired by readers of this journal, but his coloured illustrations do not work so well. In some cases (e.g. Buff-breasted Sandpiper) the colours are too bright; in others (e.g. the peeps) the illustrations fail to convey the jizz of the birds as well as do his line-drawings. But Philip Burton's plates are a revelation, far and away the finest bird identification coloured plates I have ever seen. His Curlews and Redshanks, for example, combine exquisite feather detail with impeccable jizz. Most bird painters seem unable to illustrate the pattern of each feather without losing the essential character of the bird. Burton has shown that it can be done, and done with great beauty. His White-tailed Plovers almost step off the page. Only with the Lesser Golden Plovers, which appear far too similar to Golden Plovers, could I find fault. Robert Gillmor and Norman Arlott, both well known to *British Birds* readers, contribute the remaining plates, which are well up to their usual standard. All the artists are British and here, perhaps, is an area to which the editors might look in planning future volumes. This is very much a British publication, and one of which British ornithologists should be very proud, but it does seem that the original aim to invite specialists from many countries to serve as associate editors or consultants (*Brit. Birds* 59: 323) has not been fulfilled. Language difficulties may present problems, and it is certainly true that the literature search has been vast, but a work dealing with the birds of the western Palearctic should surely have a greater input from workers in other countries.

In a couple of instances, I detected discrepancies between text and plates. In the case of the Semipalmated Plover, an indistinct wing-bar is described as one of the identifying features of the juvenile, but the author's own plate does not show any distinction from Ringed Plover. I note that the author of the paper in this journal on the first British record could not detect any difference either. The account of Lesser Golden Plover identification also conflicts somewhat with the plate: in this case, I found the text more accurate.

These criticisms are trivial, however, in the context of the scale and scope of this work. It is a worthy successor to Witherby's *Handbook* and its indebtedness to Witherby, despite the much larger geographical area it covers, is much greater than this reviewer anticipated when the work was first mooted. The format of the species accounts is similar; the authors in general have inherited the rigorous approach of the *Handbook*; and the work is a tribute to the sheer productivity of Witherby's followers in British amateur and professional ornithology. The book seems expensive at £49.50, but in terms of cost per page it works out at no dearer than many far less worthwhile books. And it will still be frequently used by you in 20 years' time.

CLIVE HUTCHINSON

Brutvogelatlas der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. By **Goetz Rheinwald.** Dachverband Deutscher Avifaunisten, Lengede, 1982. 128 pages; 216 distribution maps. DM18.00. (Available from DDA-Schriftenversand, Rosenwinkel 7, 3325 Lengede, German Federal Republic.)

There is a short introduction, placing this atlas in its European context, but the main part consists of double-page spreads, the left-hand page with texts for four species and the facing right-hand page the four maps, with distribution shown very clearly by light blue dots of varying sizes within the neat outline of West Germany. Key towns and the major rivers are indicated clearly in black, which stands out well against the light blue without obscuring the bird distributions at all. Publication has been quick: the survey ended in 1980. The recording units are not the familiar 10×10 km squares used in Britain, but are 25×25 km squares, of which there are approximately 500 in the FDR. Thus, the detail is not so fine, but is adequate to show some striking bird distributions within the country. This well produced booklet is a very useful addition to the growing series of national breeding bird atlases.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

Birds of Tropical America. By **Alexander F. Skutch.** University of Texas Press. Austin, Texas, 1983. 305 pages; 69 black-and-white text-figures. \$29.95 (or £22.50 from 1 Gower Street, London WC1E 6HA).

Potential buyers and readers should not be misled by the title of this book, which might suggest a chatty, general account of little value to anyone seriously interested in tropical American birds. It is, in fact, the latest of the series of books, begun in 1954, in which Dr Skutch has brought together an unrivalled wealth of observations accumulated over a period of more than 50 years, mainly in Costa Rica, a small country but amazingly rich in bird species. Of the six earlier books, three have been published in the Pacific Coast Avifauna series of the Cooper Ornithological Society, and three in the Publications of the Nuttall Ornithological Club.

The 34 species dealt with in this latest book are all non-passerines: tinamous, pigeons, trogons, motmots, toucans, and several other families. All the accounts have appeared before in various bird journals, some of them many years ago. Where necessary, they are up-dated with more recent information. All Skutch's papers have the merit of readability; but in this book he has made a welcome concession to the general reader by adding evocative descriptions of the country in which the observations were made, and some autobiographical detail, which would be eliminated by the severe editing to which papers in journals are subjected. Dr Skutch is above all a supreme observer of birds at the nest, and without doubt the most experienced and patient of all ornithologists who have worked in the neotropics. No other observer has found the hitherto unknown nests of so many species. Being a botanist as well as an ornithologist—indeed he made a reputation as a botanist before he was well known as an ornithologist—he continually relates the birds to their vegetational environment, an essential step in the understanding of tropical bird ecology.

Dana Gardner's excellent black-and-white drawings of each of the species dealt with are a useful adjunct to the text; it is a pity that the beautiful colour reproduction of the Turquoise-browed Motmot on the dust-jacket could not have been included in the book itself. The other black-and-white text-figures are from the author's photographs, and illustrate mainly nests, young birds, and habitats. This is a book from which all ornithologists interested in tropical birds will get much profit, and which they will also enjoy reading.

D. W. SNOW

Watching Birds. By **Ian Wallace.** Usborne, London, 1982. 64 pages; over 40 colour illustrations, some black-and-white drawings. Paperback, £1.50.

Ian Wallace has a knack of producing, within a standard format, a quite exceptional book. His *Discover Birds* was immensely evocative of all that is exciting in birding; this new slim paperback from Usborne is crammed with information and tips, ideas and ways of carrying them out. It is well designed, well illustrated and excellent value. Buy one and give it to any young budding birder (but don't forget to read it yourself before you do so).

J. T. R. SHARROCK

COMING SOON

FAIR ISLE'S 'GARDEN' BIRDS

John Holloway

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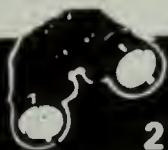
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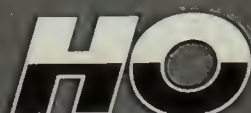
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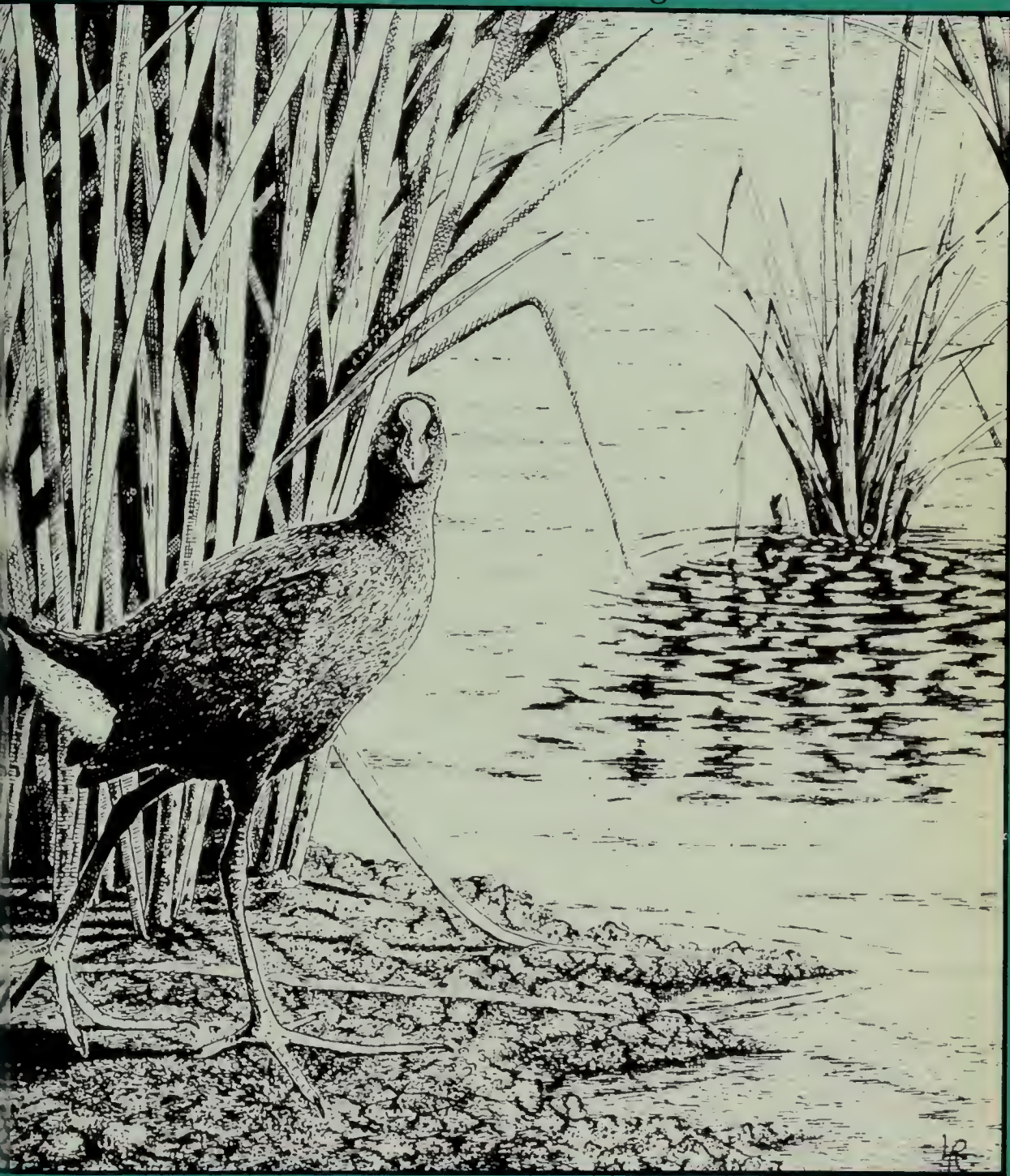
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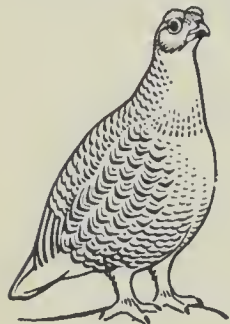
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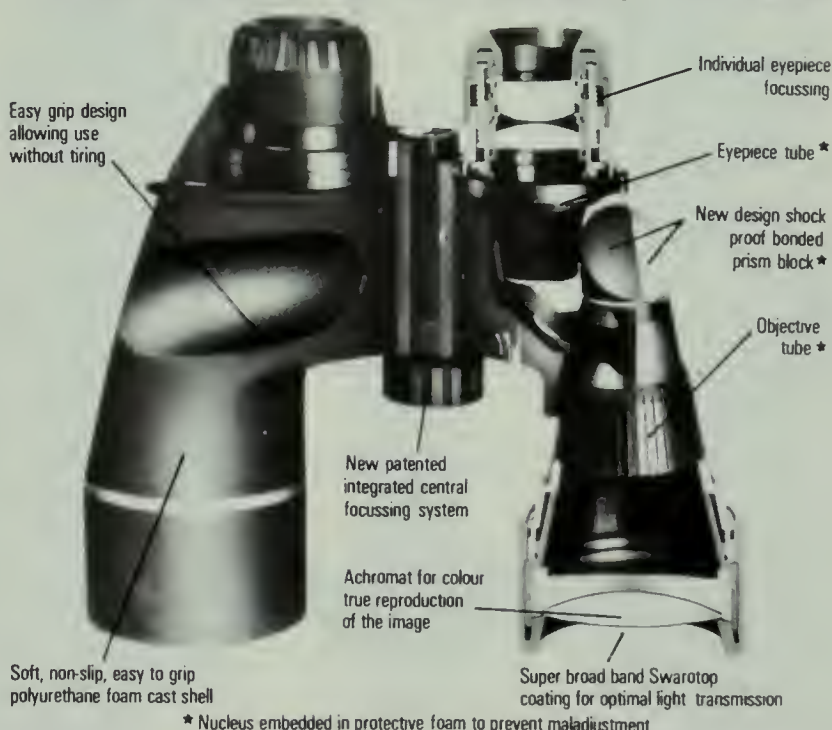
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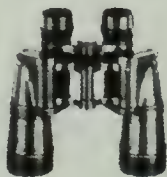


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137. Brick wall photographed through telephoto lens which provides equivalent of 20× magnification. Because of size-illusion, far end of wall, or far end of each line of bricks, looks larger than near end (*Richard Chandler*)

objects farther away from the observer are larger than they really are in comparison to nearer objects, the reverse of normal perspective. For simplicity, I have called this phenomenon 'size-illusion'.

Size-illusion can be readily demonstrated, for example, by looking through binoculars obliquely at a brick wall: the far ends of the lines of bricks appear larger than the near ends. The illusion can be reproduced in photographs taken with a telephoto lens (plate 137). Similarly, a short plank of wood, lying on the ground pointing away from the observer, will look wider at the far end when viewed through binoculars. I have noticed that the higher the magnification, and the closer the subject, the more striking is the illusion.

Because it is known that the bricks or plank are actually of even size, the observer instantly recognises these optical illusions for what they are. In natural landscapes, however, where there are no obvious perspective-lines, I believe that an observer may be unaware of the size-illusion which is

138. Size-test cards in line, showing real relative sizes (*Richard Chandler*)



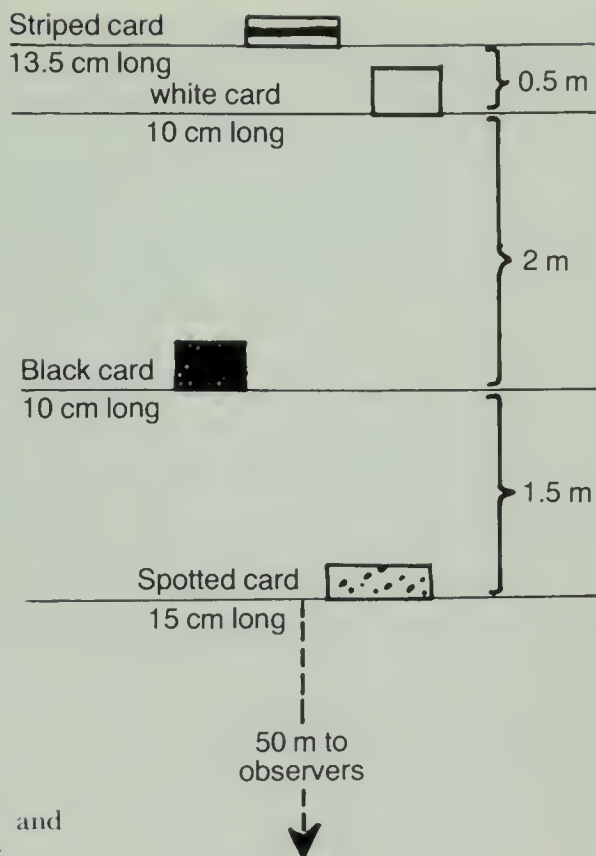


Fig. 1. Diagram showing sizes and arrangements of cards in size-test

operating, and in certain circumstances may make size judgments of birds based on images which are actually illusory.

To test this belief, and also to try to demonstrate the difficulties of estimating distance, relative distances, perspective and size as discussed earlier (Grant 1980), I devised a simple test with four cards of various sizes and patterns (plate 138). They were set up on a distant area of flat ground in the arrangement shown in fig. 1: their appearance in situ, viewed through a telephoto lens, is shown in plate 139. On separate occasions, two groups of highly experienced and competent birdwatchers were asked to make various estimates of distances and sizes. There were nine observers in group A and eight in group B. No restrictions were placed on the time spent on

139. Size-test cards arranged as shown in fig. 1, photographed at 25 m through telephoto lens which provides equivalent of 20× magnification. Relative sizes of the cards are distorted by size-illusion (*Richard Chandler*)



making their estimates, and they were free to use the naked eye and whatever optical aids they wished (a choice which they would have had if judging the size of a bird in normal circumstances). Sharp eyes would be needed to make assessments with the naked eye at the rather long ranges involved in the test (up to 54 m), however, so it is probable that the observers were most influenced by binoculars- or telescope-aided views. Answers could be given in imperial or metric measurements, but all were converted to metric. The questions are given below, with a summary of the responses.

1. How far away is the spotted card? (actual distance approximately 50m) Group A answers ranged from 40m to 80m, with an average of 63m, an average overestimate of 26%. Group B answers ranged from 18m to 91.5m, with an average of 57m, an average overestimate of 14%.

2. How far away is the striped card? (actual distance approximately 54m) Group A answers ranged from 45m to 90m, with an average of 69.5m. The spotted and striped cards were actually approximately 4m apart, but their estimated separation averaged 6.5m. Group B answers ranged from 21m to 100m, with an average of 61.5m, and an average separation of 4.5m.

3. How long is the striped card? (actual length 13.5cm) Group A answers ranged from 14cm to 30cm, with an average of 18.6cm, an average overestimate of 37.7%. Group B answers ranged from 10cm to 30cm, with an average of 18.3cm, an average overestimate of 35.5%.

4. Each observer was then asked to mark the length of the striped card on a blank sheet of paper, so that his actual perception of his size estimate could be assessed. Thus, if in answer to question three he had estimated 20cm, he was asked to mark on the sheet of paper two points 20cm apart. The actual perceptions ranged from 70% to 103% (Group A) and 66% to 100% (Group B) of the size-estimate, with an average of 92.5% (Group A) and 89.1% (Group B). The average actual perception of the length of the striped card in Group A was thus 17.2cm (92.5% of 18.6cm), still an actual overestimate of 27.4%; in Group B the equivalent figure was 16.3cm (89.1% of 18.3cm), still an actual overestimate of 20.7%.

5. If the spotted card is 30 units long, how long in units is the striped card? (actual length of striped card 27 units). In Group A, six observers estimated that they were the same size, and the other three estimated 29, 34 and 35 units, an average estimate that the striped card was 0.9 units longer instead of 3 units shorter than the spotted card, an average overestimate of 14.4%. In Group B, one observer estimated that they were the same size, one estimated 25 units, two estimated 30 units, and four 40 units, an average estimate that the striped card was 4.4 units longer than the spotted card, an average overestimate of 27%.

6. If the white card is 10 units wide, how wide is the black card? (Group A only) Two observers estimated correctly that they were the same size, six estimated 8 units and one 7.5 units, an average of 8.3 units, an average underestimate of 17%.

Discussion

The large difference in the extreme answers to questions 1 and 2 demon-

strates the difficulties of judging distance and relative distance. The answers to questions 3 and 4 demonstrate not only the problem of judging the size of lone objects in itself, but also that individuals' perception of measurements may in any case differ widely from the actual.

It is the results from questions 5 and 6, however, which demonstrate the particular pitfalls of size-illusion. I had previously believed that size was difficult to judge only on lone birds, and that if another species of known size was nearby, size assessment was comparatively straightforward. In the test, in the cases of questions 5 and 6, size comparisons were made with one card of known size, and on average in both cases the farther card was perceived as proportionately larger than it really was, producing an average overestimate of 14% (Group A) and 27% (Group B) in the first case, and an average underestimate of 17% (Group A) in the second. Translated into bird size, such discrepancies are very significant. The discrepancies are especially alarming considering that the estimates were made by very experienced birdwatchers, over relatively short distances, in a situation where there was every opportunity—with no time limit—carefully to assess perspective over flat ground, and to make comparisons with nearby grasses, plant leaves and the known-size card. In the real field situation, with quick views, moving birds, soaring raptors, passing seabirds, dashing crakes, and so on, the problems of size assessment—and the potential margin of error—would clearly be much greater.

Size-illusion needs to be borne in mind, too, when interpreting apparent sizes in photographs taken with telephoto lenses. The disproportionately larger size of the farther birds in a flock is obvious in several photographs which I have examined since realising the effects of size-illusion. When unidentified birds or possible rarities are involved, special care may be needed. The possibly misleading effects of size-illusion in photographs are illustrated in plates 140-142. In a recent paper (Wallace, on behalf of the Rarities Committee, 1979), it was suggested that the two stints were possibly Red-necked Stints *Calidris ruficollis*. In each case, the unidentified stint is farther away, and possibly thus looks disproportionately large in comparison with the nearer Dunlin *C. alpina* (plates 140 & 142) or Little Stint *C. minuta* (plate 141). Taking into account the possible effects of size-illusion, it seems likely that the two stints could be Little Stint-sized: certainly, their apparently too-large size, in itself, should be used with caution as an argument against identification as odd-looking juvenile Little Stints (which would be my personal diagnosis).

Conclusions

Some observers are undoubtedly better than others at judging size. Practice at judging distances helps, and it was probably not a coincidence that the most correct answers in the size-tests came from the observer who was used to judging driving and putting distances on the golf-course. As a general rule, however, judging the size of birds is much more difficult than would be expected if the facile advice given in field guides (where size-assessment is often suggested as the starting-point in the identification process) was taken at face value. It seems more likely that real size assessments are rarely



140. Juvenile stint *Calidris* (right) with Dunlin *C. alpina*, Dungeness, Kent, September 1965. Size-illusion clearly operating, making stint appear as large as Dunlin. In author's opinion, stint is juvenile Little Stint *C. minuta*, and apparently large size should not be held against this diagnosis (*Pamela Harrison*)

made; instead, it seems likely that size is not really judged at all, but it is known instantly an identification is made in a subconscious process drawing from prior knowledge of the species' size. In fact, real size-assessments would seem to be possible in only relatively few, rather special,



141 & 142. Juvenile stint *Calidris* with (in plate 141) juvenile Little Stint *C. minuta* (left), and (in plate 142) Dunlin *C. alpina*, Lincolnshire, September 1974. In both cases, apparently large size of stint compared with accompanying bird may be result of size-illusion and thus may not be valid argument of identification as Red-necked Stint *C. ruficollis*, or against view, shared by the author, that it is odd-looking juvenile Little Stint (*Keith Atkin*)



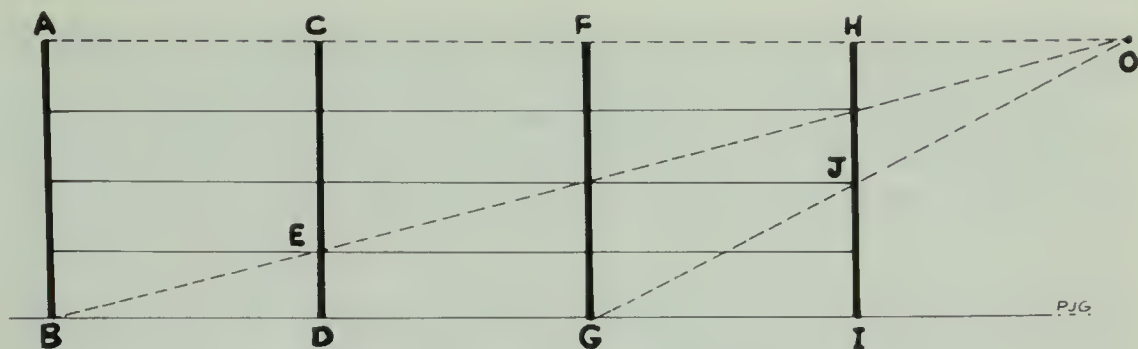


Fig. 2. Diagram to show cause of size-illusion (see text)

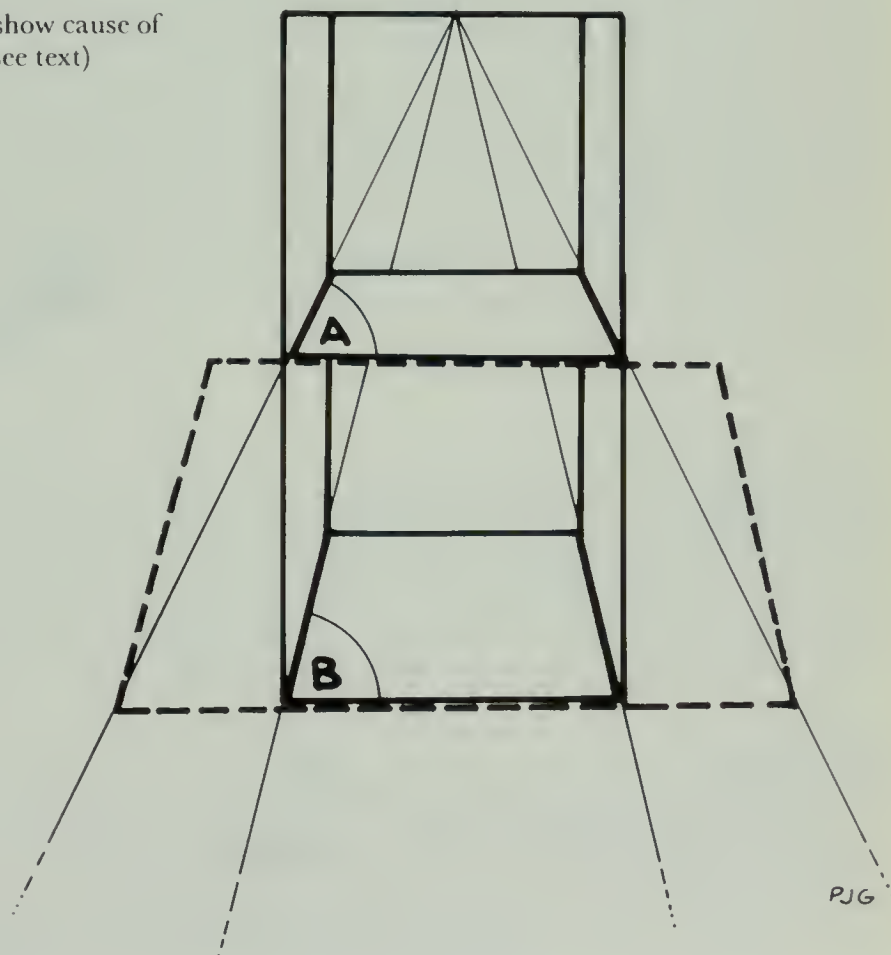
circumstances. Three examples will serve to illustrate this. First, when the subject is surrounded by two or more other birds (in a flock on the ground or in flight) of known size. In such cases, the eye would be able to compensate for the effects of size-illusion (as it can for even-sized objects, such as bricks). Secondly, when the other bird or birds are certainly at the same distance from the observer. Thirdly, in careful, close-range, naked-eye comparison with a nearby species or object of known size.

Cause of size-illusion

Figs. 2 and 3 are attempts at diagrammatic explanations of the rather complex 'optical physics' which causes size-illusion.

In fig. 2, thick lines represent objects at various distances from the

Fig. 3. Diagram to show cause of size-illusion (see text)



viewing point O. Thin lines are included to give a size scale. Broken lines represent angles of vision. When objects AB and CD are viewed with the naked eye, AB in this example will appear to be 75% (CE) the size of CD: this is normal perspective, and the eye will correctly interpret these relative sizes and the two objects will be correctly perceived as being the same size. At closer range, the difference in the relative sizes of objects FG and HI (which are the same size and spaced the same as AB and CD) will be greater. In this example, FG will appear to be 50% (HJ) the size of HI, and it can be envisaged that the nearer or farther the objects, so the difference in the relative sizes will be greater or less respectively. When objects are magnified, the relative sizes within the magnified image remain the same as when viewed with the naked eye, but the eye perceives the objects as closer than they really are, and interprets the apparent relative sizes for that perceived distance, causing size-illusion in which the farther object will appear larger than it really is in comparison with the nearer object, or *vice versa*.

In fig.3, thick lines represent a frame with three equally-spaced shelves, the top one viewed end-on at eye-level. The thin lines are converging perspective lines. It can be seen that the converging perspective lines form a more acute angle at A than at B, and it can be envisaged that the nearer or farther the plane moves towards or away from eye-level, so the angle will become more acute or obtuse respectively. If the bottom shelf were to be viewed through 2× binoculars, all its dimensions (as seen with the naked eye) would be doubled, with the perspective angles remaining the same as when viewed with the naked eye. The broken line represents that double-sized image of the bottom shelf. The eye perceives the magnified image as being twice as near (i.e. half the distance), and—importantly—on a higher plane (in this example, in the same plane as the middle shelf). Because the perspective angles remain the same as when it was in its actual lower plane, however, size-illusion is created, making the far end of the shelf appear wider than the near end. Alternatively, the eye may interpret the illusory perspective angles in a way which gives the impression that the magnified shelf is tilted towards the observer.

Acknowledgments

I thank the many observers with whom I have discussed this topic for their interest and opinions, especially David M. Cottridge who carried out research which resulted in fig. 2 and its explanation. I am grateful to the observers who carried out for me the size-tests in Falsterbo, Sweden, in September 1982 and at Santa Barbara, USA, in January 1983. I am especially grateful to Dr Richard Chandler and A. W. Martin for taking photographs specially for this paper, and Philip Chantler who explained the need for question 4 in the size-test. I thank Keith Atkin and Dr Pamela Harrison for supplying photographs.

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The eventual identification of a Royal Tern in Mid Glamorgan

S. J. Moon

At about 15.30 GMT on 24th November 1979, at Kenfig Pool, Mid Glamorgan, I scanned a group of Common *Larus canus* and Black-headed Gulls *L. ridibundus* and discovered, settled on a post, a tern with a prominent yellow bill and a black wedge through and behind each eye. It was a species unfamiliar to me and I watched it for several minutes at a range of about 100m and took a description. I was still unable to identify it, so I left to telephone other birders. Nobody lived close enough to reach Kenfig Pool by dusk, but I was able to discuss my initial field notes with Peter Lansdown in Cardiff. The light was fading fast, but I returned for further views of the tern. It was still on the post, obviously tired and easily approached; it was ringed, so I slowly waded into the water and was able to stand, thigh-deep, within 3m of it and read the first part of the ring number. I began a field sketch (fig. 1), but two Mute Swans *Cygnus olor* crashlanded nearby and the tern launched itself unsteadily from the post. Despite its apparent exhaustion, it completed a low circuit of Kenfig Pool before flying off languidly towards nearby Kenfig Sands. The whole area was thoroughly searched on the following day, but the tern was not relocated.

The following description is a summary of my notes and sketches made in the field (except where noted):

SIZE AND SHAPE Only (rather distant) size assessment was in comparison with Black-headed Gull on adjacent post: two noted as being similar in size. (When asked, at much later date, I recalled that the tern was a little

longer and fractionally bulkier than the Black-headed Gull.) Bill as long as head, stouter than that of Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*, and with slightly drooping effect, frequently pointed downwards in flight. Legs



Fig. 1. Immature Royal Tern *Sterna maxima*, Mid Glamorgan, November 1979 (traced by R. A. Hume from pencil sketch by S. J. Moon)

long and sturdy. Noticeably front-heavy appearance at rest due to bill, stocky head and neck, and short body. Wing-tips projected well beyond tail. In flight, wings looked narrow and extraordinarily long, and tail forked, though not deeply, and rather short. PLUMAGE 'Bald-headed' appearance due to black-speckled, white forehead and fore-crown and black, erectile crest, which was raised at my approach. Small, black square in front of and adjacent to each eye, behind which a black wedge of increasing width extended up to the rear crown. Remainder of head, nape, whole of neck and whole of underparts white. Mantle, scapulars and much of upperwing-coverts pale grey, similar to, though perhaps shade paler than, upperparts of Black-headed Gull (but assessment of grey plumage tones perhaps deceptive in poor light). Lesser or median coverts scaly (at rest, showed as

small, mottled area at carpal joint). At rest, exposed primaries slate-grey, with pale tips from fifth or sixth inwards. Secondaries and tertials with dark centres, and pale edges (broadest on tertials), and thin, dusky line showed along bottom of closed wing. In flight, rump and uppertail appeared pale grey, thus uniform with upperparts in general; distal areas of tail apparently paler, and tail had thin, darker tip and was noticeably slate-edged on both sides. Upperwings in flight displayed dark leading edge and carpal area, darkish bar on secondaries, pale grey inner wing, and trailing edge to secondaries and dark primaries. BARE PARTS Bill bright, rich yellow at distance, but, at close range, matt ochre-yellow tinged orange, especially on upper mandible. Eyes dark. Legs and feet black. Right leg bore dull grey metal ring, taller than wide, with number beginning 72 on lower line.

An initial perusal of the generally available literature quickly ruled out all regularly occurring terns, including Caspian Tern *S. caspia*, with which I was familiar, because of its greater bulk and very large red bill. A Sandwich Tern with an all-yellow bill could be ruled out by its slender bill. This left three possibilities: Royal Tern *S. maxima*, Crested Tern *S. bergii* and Lesser Crested Tern *S. bengalensis*. Using the available literature, I ruled out Royal Tern at this stage, as that species supposedly is larger than the Kenfig Pool tern, with wing-tips falling just short of the end of the tail or just reaching the tip of the tail when at rest, and has a white rump and tail, an orange-red bill, and yellowish legs in immature plumage. Crested Tern was discounted because of its green-tinged yellow bill and dark, dusky grey upperparts. This left only Lesser Crested Tern, and Wallace (1973) referred to 'its fairly long and slightly drooping, but not particularly deep, pale orange bill' and his drawings depict a somewhat thin-billed species. A photograph in Gooders (1969-71, page 1064) shows a bird with a bill structure and jizz very similar to the Kenfig Pool tern and with a grey tail; the text describes Lesser Crested Tern as 'pearl-grey above and white below . . . completely orange-yellow bill . . . the legs are black . . . resembles the Sandwich Tern in size . . . rather short body and short, deeply forked tail . . . long, narrow-winged appearance' and described juveniles as having 'blackish shoulder and dark outer-tail feathers', all of which, except for the depth of fork in the tail, are characters that fit the Kenfig Pool bird. Unknown to me at that time, this photograph is miscaptioned and shows Crested Tern, not Lesser Crested Tern (see Gooders's 'Errata'). With all other similar species 'eliminated', and the small amount of available literature on Lesser Crested Tern listing characters that fitted the Kenfig Pool tern, this record was submitted to *British Birds* Rarities Committee as a Lesser Crested Tern.

The ring, however, was one feature somewhat against Lesser Crested Tern. Although much ringing of this species has been carried out in Australia, and it is possible for a full-winged immature to travel from there into the northern hemisphere, it is nevertheless extremely unlikely, and the

small amount of ringing of Lesser Crested Terns in other parts of its range (such as Iran and Tunisia) seems unlikely to result in a ringed individual occurring here. It is however, more feasible that an American species such as Royal Tern would appear ringed in Great Britain, and so this possibility was explored by the Rarities Committee. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service, the American ringing organisation, was asked for its comments on the ring aspect of this record and the fact was uncovered that, in 1978 and 1979, rings with the prefix 724 beneath an address were used on young Royal Terns at six breeding colonies on the eastern seaboard of the USA from Metomkin Island, Accomack County, Virginia, in the north to Cape Lookout Channel, Carteret County, North Carolina, in the south. The evidence of the ring thus strongly suggested that the Kenfig Pool bird was a Royal Tern. The question this raised was whether or not new identification criteria could be discovered from hitherto untapped sources to allow the original description to be compatible with and thus support that theory.

The bird was originally thought to be too small to be a Royal Tern. Two things, however, should have been borne in mind: size is very hard to judge on a lone bird, and the closer that one gets to a bird the smaller it seems. It is also interesting to note that the Royal Tern in Kent in 1965 was described by Davenport & Hollyer (1968) as 'a little larger than accompanying Sandwich Terns . . . the bird seemed to be slightly too small [to be a Royal Tern]'. In fact, a Lesser Crested Tern is slightly smaller than either a Sandwich Tern or a Black-headed Gull, whilst a Royal Tern is virtually the same size as a Laughing Gull *L. atricilla*. This, combined with the stockiness of the Kenfig Pool bird compared with the gracefulness attributed to a Lesser Crested Tern, makes identification as Royal Tern not impossible.

The long wings of the Kenfig Pool bird in relation to the tip of the tail when at rest initially appeared to rule out Royal Tern. Close examination of photographs of Royal Terns revealed, however, that most stand with the wings held well forward and the shoulders projecting beyond the lower breast. The obviously tired Kenfig Pool tern did not display this proud stance, and the resulting lack of prominent shoulders could have been the reason why the wing-tips seemed noticeably longer than usual in relation to the tip of the tail. Additionally, if the tail of the Kenfig Pool tern had been badly worn, which is not inconceivable considering the time of year and the bird's immaturity, it would not only increase the expected projection of the primaries beyond the tail but would explain the rather shallow fork in the tail. A photograph in Gooders (1969-71, page 1063) shows many adult Royal Terns at rest, some of which have wings extending noticeably beyond the tail, despite the longer tail streamers possessed by adults compared with immatures. This illustrates the caution which must be exercised when comparing the relationship between wing-length and tail-length in the field. Another obstacle originally thought to rule against identification as Royal Tern has thus been removed.

The available literature suggested that the pale grey rump and uppertail of the Kenfig Pool tern ruled out Royal Tern. S. C. Madge (*in litt.*), however, stated of Royal Tern that 'young birds . . . show dark in the tail',

and P. J. Grant (*in litt.*) noted 'grey centre rump' when discussing adults, and commented that he would expect a first-winter bird to be even more grey-rumped.

The yellow, orange-tinged bill was also thought to be incorrect for a Royal Tern. Young Royal Terns are, however, yellower-billed than adults, and recent observations of immature Royal Terns by P. J. Grant and R. H. Dennis (*in litt.*) have shown the bill colour to be yellow or pale orange in the USA in October and orange in the Gambia in January. J. Weske (*in litt.*) stated: 'Royal chicks, when quite large but not yet flying, still show a fair amount of variation in soft part colors' but also said 'I've never seen a flight-capable Royal that had a bill that was anything but orange . . . It is paler or duller in immatures than in adults.' On comparing photographs of the two species, B. Little (*in litt.*) stated 'Some Royal first-years had similar coloured bills to Lesser Crested.' Thus, it is clear that considerable variation can occur between yellow and orange bills in immature, particularly first-winter, Royal Terns. Incidentally, T. P. Inskipp (*in litt.*) observed that, although Royal has the thicker, heavier bill, both Royal and Lesser Crested Terns have bill length equal to head length. Bill colour does not, therefore, rule against the Kenfig Pool bird being an immature Royal Tern.

The black legs and feet appeared originally to exclude the possibility of the Kenfig Pool bird being an immature Royal Tern. Though the leg colour is correct for adult Royal Tern, there are clearly several features which make this bird an immature, as discussed later. Concerning first-winter Royal Terns, P. J. Grant (*in litt.*) stated 'in September/October they have yellow-ochre legs', and D. J. Britton (*in litt.*), of observations made in early October, wrote that the legs are 'dirty slightly orangy yellow with odd dark areas'. It is clearly a question of when a Royal Tern achieves the black legs of adulthood. P. J. Grant (*in litt.*), discussing Royal Terns' legs in early October, stated 'they could well (indeed, are likely to) blacken by five to six weeks later in the year'. The black legs of the Kenfig Pool bird, which was seen on the late date of 24th November, do not, therefore, rule out identification as immature Royal Tern.

Three other useful field characters have emerged from the research carried out on this record regarding the separation of Royal and Lesser Crested Terns: leg length; extent of black on the head (non-breeding birds only); and pattern of the closed wing (immatures only). Directly comparing the two species, R. H. Dennis (*in litt.*) stated 'The Royal's legs were longer and you could see the knee clearly whereas Lesser Crested seemed lower', and B. Little (*in litt.*) wrote 'Royal is longer legged [than Lesser Crested]' and 'There is no noticeable thickening at the knees in Lesser Crested.'

Commenting on the small black spot which a Royal Tern has in front of the eye, both D. J. Britton and S. C. Madge (*in litt.*) confirmed that, whilst they could not be sure of its absence, they did not note this feature whilst watching Lesser Crested Terns. D. J. Britton and R. H. Dennis (*in litt.*) both pointed out that Lesser Crested Tern has a more slender black mark behind the eye than Royal Tern, and D. J. Britton and T. P. Inskipp (*in litt.*) commented that the black is less extensive on the nape on Royal Tern than on Lesser Crested Tern, where it extends farther down the nape.

A direct comparison of immatures of the two species in the Gambia in January led R. H. Dennis (*in litt.*) to comment on the comparative 'patchiness at tip of shorter primaries' with regard to Royal Tern, and his sketches show Royal Tern at rest possessing dark wing-tips, white primary coverts and dark tertials, and Lesser Crested Tern at rest having a much smaller, dark wing-tip, a thin dark lower edge to the closed wing and an otherwise plain grey wing.

The five points upon which Royal Tern had been eliminated prior to the submission of the record (size, relationship between tip of tail and tips of primaries, rump and uppertail colour, bill colour and leg colour) have all been shown to be not incompatible with identification as immature Royal Tern, and several characters possessed by the Kenfig Pool tern (size, bill structure, leg length, extent of black on the head and pattern of the closed wing) are now seen to eliminate Lesser Crested Tern.

Many characteristics displayed by the Kenfig Pool bird clearly show it to be an immature, probably in its first winter: at rest, there was the small, mottled area at the carpal joint, the pale tips to the inner primaries, the dark-centred, pale-fringed tertials, the greyiness and dark tip and edges of the tail and the yellowish bill; and in flight there was the dark leading edge to the wing with the pale grey inner wing, and the darkish bar on the secondaries.

After much hard work and research and two recirculations, the record was accepted by the *British Birds* Rarities Committee as an immature, probably first-winter, Royal Tern. It is the fifth Royal Tern to be recorded in Britain and Ireland, the others being one found long dead in Co. Dublin on 24th March 1954, one in Kent on 28th and 29th July 1965, one in Cornwall on 2nd September 1971, and one in Merseyside and Clwyd on 8th and 22nd September 1974.

Acknowledgments

A particular debt is owed to members of the Rarities Committee for their often lengthy and constructive comments on this record during its three circulations. I am especially grateful to Peter Lansdown for his helpful criticism of a first draft.

Summary

An immature tern seen at Kenfig Pool, Mid Glamorgan, on 24th November 1979 was at first thought to be and was submitted as a Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*. Much subsequent discussion and research has produced some new identification criteria for large terns and the record has now been accepted as an immature, probably first-winter, Royal Tern *S. maxima*, the fifth recorded in Britain and Ireland.

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S. J. Moon, Kenfig Pool and Dunes Local Nature Reserve Centre, Ton Kenfig, near Pyle, Mid Glamorgan

Personalities

31 Hilary Burn

Dominated as it is by often brawny and frequently bearded males, what a pleasure to include in this series a truly feminine female subject. Although almost invariably clad in her favourite jeans, Hilary Burn manages to look elegant whether dining in London or gum-booted midst the mud on her Somerset farmstead. She will, however, disapprove of these opening sentences, for she is a liberated lady, anti such male-chauvinist comments.



143. Hilary Burn (*Heather O. Catchpole*)

Although the initials HB appear more often in the corners of paintings than in support of records in the pages of bird reports, Hilary is an ornithologist with artistic talent rather than an artist who has chosen to paint birds. The talent, she believes, was inherited from her father's side of her family: he was an industrial designer/draughtsman, and her great-uncle was an art teacher. At her all-girls school in Macclesfield, she won the art prize 'with boring regularity'. Although her birding nowadays is mostly around the woods and hills of Exmoor, she was a regular reservoir-visitor (though *never* a twitcher) in her native Cheshire twenty-odd years ago, and later, when living in Yorkshire, John Mather took her under his wing, and also trained her as a ringer. It was her husband, David Burn (from whom she parted three years ago), however, who encouraged her to paint birds and with whom she attended her first BTO Conference. It was there that she met Robert Gillmor, who persuaded her to submit some of her work for his next conference sale. Her training was not in art—she got her (good) degree in zoology at Leeds University and went on to obtain a Graduate Certificate of Education, and even taught biology for two years in a Leeds

comprehensive school, but did not enjoy it. Her paintings reveal her careful, scientific background, with as much emphasis on correct habitat and jizz as on plumage details. Indeed, she says that her ideal painting is one where the habitat is 'right' and the bird just happens to have sat (or stood or swum) in the picture. (The Lesser Spotted Woodpecker on the cover of the winter 1982 issue of *Birds* is a good example.) She is critical of her own work. Just sometimes, however, she is satisfied: her eyes sparkle with pleasure as she explains that, when 'getting it right', it feels as if the bird itself is on the canvas or paper and that she is painting over its actual plumage. While not attempting to copy their styles, the artists whom she most admires are Thorburn (her favourite), Ennion ('always an inspiration'), Gillmor ('The Master' in black-and-white), and Robert Bateman (the Canadian artist).

Most of Hilary's work appears in books. She has been the main illustrator of 11, and her work has appeared in many others. It was Dr Stephen Sutton, her lecturer at Leeds University, who first persuaded her to illustrate one of his books: *Woodlice*. Others soon followed, on *Drosophila* (fruit-flies) and then *Aphids*, but most since then have been on birds or occasionally mammals. The latest is *The RSPB Book of British Birds*. She has had one-woman exhibitions in Manchester and in Arundel. She stresses, however, that she paints for people who love birds and that it is *their* critical opinions which she values (rather than the views of 'the art world').

Hilary's favourite birds are owls (drawable), Bullfinches (so gentle when handled: 'Don't all ringers like them, but hate Blue Tits?') and Long-tailed Tits, especially the parties which pass through her remote, Somerset, wilderness garden. For the past two years, during the renovation of her old farm cottage, she and her partner have lived in an on-site workmen's hut, which is 'cosy' or 'cramped' depending upon one's outlook (luckily, she is basically a tidy person). The rural holding is shared with up to eight pedigree goats (with which she has won awards at local and regional agricultural shows in Kent and in Somerset), four 'Foreign Shorthairs' (splendid Siamese-like cats which give her 'aesthetic pleasure' and 'conversation') and several Khaki Campbells (which she describes as 'comic egg-laying machines'). A lucky visitor will be offered some of Hilary's home produce to sample: she enjoys cooking, and also relaxes with light reading (thrillers), classical music, and Radio 4 (*not* in the morning, but she paints while listening to an afternoon play).

Hilary's immediate ambitions are, first, actually to move into her house and make it a home, and, secondly, to give up the penniless part of being a penniless artist. She sets herself strict schedules, and then gets pleasure from successfully meeting or beating every deadline. Her idea of a treat, however, is to take a day off to go birding—'alone, or with someone who also likes to sit and wait rather than dash around'—or an evening off to go out for a good meal (French, Italian or Indian), or to the theatre or a film.

Hilary Burn ('Hilly' to only her closest friends)—informal, natural, friendly, infectiously full of fun, with a mischievous smile and a tinkling laugh: a lovely person; clever, but modest, and unquestionably one of Britain's foremost wildlife artists.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

Identification pitfalls and assessment problems

6 Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola*

Records of this species can be as difficult to judge as the species itself can be to identify: the main problem being that bright young (juvenile or first-winter) Sedge Warblers *A. schoenobaenus* superficially resemble Aquatics and are a major pitfall for the unwary.



145. Above, first-winter Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola* (note 'tiger-stripe' upperparts, two pale 'tramlines', streaked uppertail-coverts, and pointed tail feathers), Lincolnshire, September 1971 (R. B. Wilkinson)

144. Left, adult Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* (note relatively unmarked back and rounded tail feathers), Kent, June 1977 (Jeff Pick)



146. Juvenile Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*, Netherlands, July 1970 (*P. Munsterman*)

147. Adult male Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* (note unmarked underparts and, on this individual, a 'pitfall' crown-stripe), Suffolk, April 1982 (*R. J. Chandler*)





148. First-winter Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola* (note trace of fine streaking on breast and flanks), Cornwall, August 1977 (A. T. Flumm)

149. Juvenile Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* (note spotted breast), Hertfordshire, July 1980 (A. P. Johnson)



The two species are the same size, and they occur in similar habitats on migration. Whilst they have plumage similarities, there are several differences, most of which need to be seen and checked before identification as Aquatic can be regarded as having been clinched. These are:

1. Yellowish-buff upperparts (dullest on adults and yellowest, even orangy-yellow, on young birds) with long, black, almost continuous streaks on back creating a 'tiger stripe' pattern. Down the edge of the mantle, on either side of the central black stripes, are two broad, pale 'tramlines'. (Even the brightest Sedge is only buffish above, or more usually grey-brown, with short, diffuse, brownish streaks, and does not show pale 'tramlines'.) Upperparts described simply as 'pale, streaked dark brown' would be insufficient for a claim as Aquatic.
2. Bold head pattern of buff-yellow crown-stripe and supercilium, separated by clear-cut blackish lateral crown-stripes which broaden on nape. (Sedge has a brown crown, lightly streaked darker; though young birds especially can show a paler crown-stripe, this is never clear-cut and is always dark-streaked.)
3. Streaked rump and, in particular, uppertail-coverts. The streaked rump can be difficult to observe on Aquatic, but the uppertail-coverts are particularly well marked, having black centres to the feathers, with broad buff to orangy-buff edges. (There is no streaking on rump and barely any on uppertail-coverts of Sedge.)
4. Bright flesh or pearly pink legs. (Light brown on Sedge.)
5. Pointed tail feathers which sometimes produce a spiky effect to a graduated tail-end. (Individual feathers are not pointed on Sedge, and the tail is only slightly rounded, not so graduated.)

150. Adult female Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola* on nest (note head pattern and fine streaking on sides of breast), German Democratic Republic, June 1974 (Heinz Waurzyniak & Gertfred Sohns)



6. Fine streaks on upper breast and flanks are usually present on adults, but these are less obvious on first-winters and absent on juveniles. (The reverse is basically true of Sedge: adults show no breast markings, but juveniles and to a lesser extent first-winters do, although these are more spot-like than the fine streaking of adult Aquatic.)

Many of these distinguishing features are shown in plates 144-150.

Over 90% of Aquatic Warblers in Britain and Ireland are in August and September, so descriptions of any claimed outside those two months should be examined very critically.

RICHARD PORTER

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Mystery photographs

80 Is this neat, smooth mystery bird with a black-and-white tail band perhaps a dove *Streptopelia* diving from an overhead wire to a patch of spilled grain? The strongly two-toned wings might support such a conclusion—but no, surely the triangular head and short, pale-based bill indicate a bird of prey. Indeed it is; the only likely possibilities with such dark outer and pale inner wings and a pale tail with a black sub-terminal band are males of the Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* and Lesser Kestrel *F. naumanni*. This bird has a clear, unmarked back—so it is a Lesser. If only they were all so easy! The pale blue head with almost no pattern, unmarked pale, foxy-chestnut back and forepart of the upperwing-coverts, a variable bluish area across the greater coverts—scarcely contrasted with the rest in tone and not always easy to see—and lightly spotted rich pinkish-buff underparts make the adult male fairly easy. The pale underwing is often evident too—but it still requires more than a quick glance to confirm this small raptor. Immature males with remnants of juvenile spots above create more complex problems and females are difficult to separate from Kestrels in the field. Like this male, photographed in Spain in March 1975 by P. Dubois, they are relatively small and light and neatly proportioned, sometimes with the same fractionally protruding central tail feathers. In my best views, also in Spain, I noted a less quick flight action than the male's, but still a shallow, fluttery wingbeat (which may be called a lighter action than Kestrel's but, because of its speed, not necessarily more graceful or flexible). The female's pale underwing looked dull whitish with dark tips at a distance, but at closer range the underwing-coverts looked spotted all over and the secondaries barred (the primaries less so),





151. Mystery photograph 81. Identify this species. Answer next month

without the male's classic mark of a contrasting darker band of spots across the greater and median underwing-coverts. Lone females are not easy: get the pale claws!

R. A. HUME

Notes

Peregrine probably raising five young Late in the evening of 17th May 1980, Jim Beswetherick telephoned me to say that he had counted five chicks in the eyrie of a Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* in Cornwall. On 19th, A. Rattray and I visited the eyrie (one known well to me from previous years) and found four chicks sitting out in the open, pulling at the remains of a kill, while the adult looked on; the fifth chick appeared half an hour later. On 23rd May, I saw all five chicks being fed: two were well advanced, with little down; two were partially feathered; and the fifth was covered in down, with just the tips of the primaries and tail feathers showing (this fifth was not a runt: it was not last in the food queue). By the middle of the first week of June, two chicks were already on the wing, with the remaining three dispersed all over the scree. Later, four young were seen in the air together (I have no reason to suppose that the fifth did not survive). The BTO has no records of five young being raised, or even hatched, by Peregrines, although *The Handbook* states that from four to six eggs may be laid. It is most improbable that a falconer had placed an



additional chick in the nest: not even the most foolhardy would risk life and limb to cope with descending such a perilous cliff. R. B. TRELEAVEN

Bluewings, 21 Tiny Meadows, South Petherwin, Launceston, Cornwall PL15 7JD

BWP vol. 2 makes no mention of five young being reared by Peregrines, and even four being raised is not common. EDS

Several adult Common Terns attempting to feed juvenile In early August 1980, at Quenard Point, Alderney, Channel Islands, my wife and I were watching a juvenile Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* from 30 m begging on a rock. As it called, an adult tern came to feed it a small fish. After this had happened two or three times, more adults arrived. At one time, there were four adult Common Terns on the rock, each with a fish in its bill, attempting to feed the juvenile. The latter, however, would accept fish from only one (or possibly two: both parents?), and would not call for or accept food from the others. The presumed parent, having fed the young, flew off without attacking the other adults or reacting to them in any way. This continued during the whole of our 20-25 minutes' watching.

KENNETH V. COOPER

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Dr Euan K. Dunn has commented as follows: 'This behaviour is quite well known to me, although probably not well appreciated by people who do not spend a lot of time with terns. I used to note it at the ternery on Coquet Island, Northumberland, particularly among Sandwich Terns *S. sandvicensis*: their approaches towards a young tern (fledged or unfledged, but usually around fledging age and never downy chicks) were typically rebuffed by the rightful parent(s) if present, and also by the young themselves. I assumed that the strange "adults" attempting to feed were either failed breeders or immatures, deduced from their general hesitancy and tentative behaviour in the colony area. A. J. Smith (1975, *Brit. Birds* 68: 142-156) came to similar conclusions, and also recorded the young responding aggressively towards such approaches by strange adults. To my knowledge, there is no satisfactory explanation for the behaviour. In my view, the proffering "immatures" (probably close to a breeding attempt) are sufficiently motivated by the sight of the young to try to feed them as if they were chick-rearing themselves. I should add that most of my similar observations were at the colony itself; Mr Cooper's account of attempted "muscling in" away from the colony is somewhat more interesting.' EDS

Identification of Sooty and Bridled Terns D. J. Holman covered the main identification points concerning Sooty *Sterna fuscata* and Bridled Terns *S. anaethetus* in his 'Mystery photographs' text (*Brit. Birds* 75: 422-423). There are, however, other differences which are obvious when these species are viewed from beneath. These are apparent in photographs, from which R. A. Hume has drawn fig. 1.

Bridled Tern is the slenderer, but Sooty Tern is the more strongly contrasted of the two. While the flight-feathers and central tail-feathers of Sooty are distinctly sooty-black, the rest of the underparts are pure white. On the other hand, from underneath, the flight-feathers and central tail-feathers of Bridled Tern are dark grey or dark silvery grey, with a very faint café-au-lait wash, and the rest of the underparts are whitish, tinged buff or café-au-lait. On Bridled, the central tail-feathers are considerably paler than the flight-feathers, so the contrast between the whitish outer tail-



Fig. 1. Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata* and Bridled Tern *S. anaethetus* viewed from below
(drawn by R. A. Hume from photographs by Stefan Lithner)

feathers and the pale grey central tail-feathers is much less than that between the dark silvery grey flight-feathers and the whitish underwing-coverts. At times, it can be hard to detect any contrast at all in the tail of Bridled, whereas on Sooty the contrast is as strong on the undertail as it is on the underwing.

STEFAN LITHNER

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Razorbills robbing Puffins On 28th July and on a number of occasions between 3rd and 9th August 1980, in North Bay, Skokholm, Dyfed, we observed Razorbills *Alca torda* pursuing Puffins *Fratercula arctica* as the latter returned with fish to their burrows. The last of the breeding Razorbills and their young had left the island, and the adults involved were presumed to be either non-breeders or failed breeders. The Puffins were still feeding young. Never more than two Razorbills were seen taking part in Puffin-chasing, and these either acted individually or paired up to pursue one Puffin. Two strategies were used to locate a Puffin: either the Razorbills sat on the water about 200m offshore and waited for fish-bearing Puffins to fly past (they appeared able to discriminate between those with and those without fish at ranges of 50m or more); or they patrolled up and down, searching for Puffins resting on the sea with fish. A resting Puffin would either dive or fly off when a Razorbill splashed down next to it; but underwater pursuit by the Razorbill invariably resulted in the Puffin flying, so, whichever initial method was used, an aerial chase always ensued. These chases, sometimes over 1,500m, usually followed a similar course, the Razorbills closely following the evasive actions of the Puffin and appearing to attempt to prevent escape landwards. Two Razorbills acting together seemed to be

more successful than one on its own. They apparently had little difficulty in keeping up with Puffins and the latter, unless lucky enough to escape, tired and landed on the sea, where they immediately dived, closely pursued by the larger auk(s); when they surfaced, the whole aerial chase was sometimes repeated, but more often the Puffin made off, flying or swimming, leaving the Razorbill(s) sitting on the sea. On one occasion, a Razorbill was seen to strike a Puffin as both surfaced simultaneously. Unfortunately, the range of the observations (up to 1,000m from our vantage point), the speed of events and the fact that pursuits generally ended underwater made it impossible to judge the success rate of chases, but occasionally we were able to confirm that the Puffin left the scene without a fish in its bill. After a chase, the Razorbills usually rested for some minutes before finding another Puffin, but once, after a successful theft, they indulged in some (very unseasonal) ritual fish presentation, presumably with the fish they had just taken from a Puffin.

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Ranger's Cottage, Northfield, St Abbs, Berwickshire TD14 5QF

Calls of Swift and Pallid Swift Separation in the field of Swift *Apus apus* and Pallid Swift *A. pallidus* is acknowledged to be difficult.

During two weeks in eastern Spain in August 1982, I had frequent opportunity to study Pallid Swifts. I consider that the best means of separating the two species are the differences in flight pattern and silhouette noted by W. G. Harvey (*Brit. Birds* 74: 170-178). In addition, however, I suggest that the call of Pallid Swift is distinctive, if not diagnostic, as a field character. Most field guides describe the call of Pallid Swift as 'similar to that of Swift'. This is true in terms of pitch, tone and duration, but the call of Pallid is markedly disyllabic, and quite distinct from the familiar, 'single' screech of Swift. I heard Pallid Swifts calling both at their nest-sites and on feeding sorties over the coastal hinterland; indeed, the call often drew attention to parties feeding at a considerable height, which would otherwise have gone unnoticed.

If the call is indeed distinctive, it might aid the identification of future vagrant Pallid Swifts, although, as W. G. Harvey noted, the Stodmarsh individual was not heard to call, and single migrant swifts are often silent.

D. J. BURGESS
5 Howard Lane, Boughton, Northampton

Sounds of Grasshopper Warbler and wood-cricket On 17th July 1982, in the New Forest, Hampshire, I heard what I assumed to be seven singing Grasshopper Warblers *Locustella naevia* within a distance of approximately 3km. They were all 'reeling' in the usual way, but when I submitted the record to the Hampshire recorder, at the end of the year, I received a query and a reminder of a pitfall of which I had been only vaguely aware. Whilst mid July is not outside the song period of Grasshopper Warbler, it is getting late to hear regular song. The wood-cricket *Nemobius sylvestris*, however, is heard mostly during June to November, and sounds almost exactly like the

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Grasshopper Warbler. Its stridulation is a quick, loud churring noise, frequently interrupted by very short pauses. According to D. R. Ragge (1965, *Grasshoppers, Crickets and Cockroaches of the British Isles*), when one hears this sound in the insect's natural haunts it is generally a chorus of several males, thus making the noise sound continuous. The insect itself is about 2.5 cm long and can be difficult to locate (except by turning over the leaf-litter), since it lives amongst dead leaves in rides, clearings and the borders of woods, where it is especially associated with holly *Ilex aquifolium* and oak *Quercus* in old woodland. In Britain, it is restricted to southern counties from Surrey and Hampshire to Wiltshire and Devon.

In recent years, New Forest records of Grasshopper Warbler in spring or early summer have tended to be few, so large numbers of what may appear to be singing birds later in the year are clearly suspect and need to be treated with extreme caution. Although Grasshopper Warblers will sing in the middle of hot, sunny days, they are perhaps more generally associated with overcast weather conditions and are more typically active during late evening, at night and at dawn. Wood-crickets sing mostly by day, but also on warm nights (J. F. Burton *in litt.*).

R. J. SENIOR

24 Rochester Road, Southsea, Hampshire

A thorough survey of the problems caused by insect (and amphibian) noises which sound like the songs of birds is the subject of a forthcoming major paper by J. F. Burton and E. D. H. Johnson, which was nearing completion when Mr Senior's contribution was submitted. Eds

Male Brambling displaying to female Chaffinch On 13th April 1980, in a habitat of birch *Betula* intermixed with pedunculate oak *Quercus robur* and rowan *Sorbus aucuparia* at the Moor Farm Reserve near Woodhall Spa, Lincolnshire, my attention was drawn by a short nasal call not unlike that of a Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*, which, after a few minutes, was found to be that of a male Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*. Its behaviour was curious. About 10m up in a birch tree, it was calling and displaying to a female Chaffinch *F. coelebs*. As it called, the Brambling stretched its neck and head forward and raised its tail; its uppertail-coverts appeared fluffed out, the white rump being very well displayed, and its wings were extended but slightly drooped. After each call, its tail and wings returned to their normal position; it swayed from side to side, and completed the sequence by vigorously 'wiping' its beak on a birch twig. The whole process was repeated several times. If the Chaffinch moved a few metres, the Brambling quickly followed; but, if she remained in a fairly stationary position, the Brambling displayed, moving around her. Throughout the whole sequence of events, which lasted about 12 minutes, the Chaffinch remained quiet and quite unperturbed by the Brambling's presence. The Chaffinch eventually flew away, quickly followed by the Brambling, which was not seen again on the reserve.

PETER C. ROWORTH

Moor Farm, Wellsyke Lane, Kirkby-on-Bain, Woodhall Spa, Lincolnshire

As Derek Goodwin has pointed out, hybridisation occurs in captivity. There are also instances of apparent hybrid young being reared in Britain in recent years (*The Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland*, page 451; *Brit. Birds* 73: 25). Eds

Communal mineral-eating by Siskins Just before 09.00 hours on 4th January 1980, in Stoffen, near Alpbach, Austria, I came across large numbers of Siskins *Carduelis spinus* in and about a small group of trees. About ten minutes earlier, I had walked through the hamlet and had not seen any birds at all in the trees, but on my return the area seemed alive with Siskins and there was ceaseless activity as small flocks totalling at least 300 individuals flew to and fro between the trees and the lowest parts of one particular house. Approaching closer, I found that they were not (as I had half expected) feeding on some rich artificial supply of food, but that at least 50 were clinging to the walls of the house below the lowest balcony. I moved to within about 10m and studied them through binoculars for several minutes: some were motionless, many were pecking at the stonework, and a few were partly within cavities and depressions in the wall, also pecking at the stonework; superficially, the appearance of the whole group was more akin to a plague of mice than to a flock of birds. There was, however, a continuous movement of Siskins leaving and arriving on this particular section of wall; twice they all fled from the house into the trees, but some soon returned. Occasionally, when some arrived at the wall, there were brief scuffles with those already clinging there as the latter were displaced. A few initially landed elsewhere on the house, particularly on the wooden balconies, before flying down to the lowest section of the wall. There appeared to be no food whatsoever on the wall, and it seemed that the Siskins must be taking minerals or grit from the stonework, probably mainly from the mortar in the rough joints. Although considerable snow had fallen on the previous day, the night had been clear and very cold; presumably it was only in exceptionally sheltered situations that any unfrozen material could be found.

After an overcast night, the following morning was less cold; although I visited the area from 08.40 to 09.15, I saw no Siskins. On 6th January, which was again clear and cold, I walked to the hamlet at 08.50; within 50m of the house, I heard and saw a party of at least 100 Siskins, which flew off at a height of about 5m; although I waited for 35 minutes, none reappeared.

From this fragmentary evidence, it seemed that the communal collection of minerals or grit from the house by Siskins might be of regular occurrence, at least after intensely cold nights.

E. W. FLAXMAN

Breckland, 20 Waterlow Road, Reigate, Surrey RH2 7EX

Derek Goodwin has commented as follows: 'I think it much more likely that lime (and/or other minerals) needed for digestion and assimilation was the prime objective, rather than grit for grinding, although either or both may have been. I have seen similar behaviour, on old walls, by House *Passer domesticus* and Tree Sparrows *P. montanus*.' Comparable behaviour by Scottish Crossbills *Loxia scotica* and by Crossbills *L. curvirostra* has been noted previously (*Brit. Birds* 69: 312; 71: 540-541). Eds

Seventy-five years ago...

'An invasion of Pallas's Sand-Grouse (*Syrhaptes paradoxus*) into this country was not unexpected since the bird appeared numerous in European Russia in the latter half of April,

and has been reported from several parts of Germany . . . The following have been reported in England:- *Yorkshire*. — Three flying high between Burley and Ilkley on May 20th . . . *Hampshire*. — Five, said to be of this species, were seen near East Liss about the middle of April . . . Five were clearly identified . . . near Burley, New Forest, early in August . . . Two were seen flying N.E. over Havant on July 8th . . . *Berkshire*. — One was picked up near the River Kennet on June 6th . . . *Essex*. — A pair was seen several times near Southend-on-Sea in the last week of June . . . *Surrey*. — Three were observed at Holmwood on June 28th . . . *Norfolk*. — Two were seen at Brancaster on June 28th . . . — H.F.W.' (*Brit. Birds* 2: 98, August 1908)

Letters

The origin of 'twitcher' Richard Porter (*Brit. Birds* 75: 537) has traced 'twitcher' back to 1968, but what were 'people who chase rare birds' called before that? My recollection is that before the Second World War they were known as 'pot-hunters', and after it were called 'tally-hunters'. Did anything come between tally-hunting and twitching? R. S. R. FITTER

Drifts, Chinnor Hill, Oxford OX9 4BS

I am responding to Richard Porter's letter (*Brit. Birds* 75: 537). The word 'twitcher' derives from 'ticker', a term in common use at Cley in the late 1950s. A ticker (or 'tick-hunter') was a person who chased around after rare birds, recently published Peterson field guide in pocket, literally marking a tick (✓) against the species seen, in what was at the time the only pocket-sized list of species recorded in Britain. Quite when the transition took place I do not know, but a ticker had all the features of what is now a twitcher.

JOHN HOLLOWAY

Stackhoull Store, Fair Isle, Shetland

'Twitcher' is actually a John Izzard-Bob Emmett word which was coined in the middle 1950s to describe our good friend Howard Medhurst, alias 'The Kid'.

Birdwatching transport was very much a two-wheeled affair in those days. John Izzard and his girlfriend, Sheila, rode a *Lambretta*, whilst Howard rode pillion on my *Matchless*. The *Lambretta* had a unique luxury built into it: a back-warming, lap-warming dog, 'Jan', which used to travel jammed between John and Sheila. There was no such creature comfort on the *Matchless*; on arrival at some distant destination, Howard would totter off the back of my machine and shiveringly light up a cigarette. This performance was repeated so regularly up and down the country that it became synonymous with good birds, and, as we all felt a slight nervous excitement at the uncertainty involved in trying to see a particular bird, it became a standing joke, and John and I would act out a nervous twitch to match Howard's shiverings. This led us to describe a trip to see a rare bird as 'Being on a twitch'. Inevitably, this led to the term 'twitcher'. It was our association with the Portsmouth Group in the New Forest that extended the term into more general use. In the late 1960s, it became a derogatory term to describe unscrupulous tick-hunters (and as far as I am concerned it still

is). It is pretty safe to say, however, that Howard Medhurst was—in the nicest possible way—the original twitcher.

R. E. EMMETT

39 Bollo Lane, Acton Green, London W4

R. E. Emmett's letter seems to document the derivation of the word 'twitcher'. The sequence appears to have been pot-hunter, tally-hunter, tick-hunter, ticker and twitcher. Unless readers have contrary evidence, this correspondence is closed. EDS

Twitcher bashing I was interested to read the latest addition to the now well established convention of 'twitcher bashing', by Mr James Wilde (*Brit. Birds* 75: 136). It raised several fundamental points which all ornithologists/birders should bear in mind.

First, to reduce the 'twitcher's' delight in seeing unusual birds to a 'crude pursuit for the purpose of one-upmanship' is obviously inadequate. One could equally say that any 'serious' scientific paper on ornithology was written with the intention merely of furthering the writer's status in an academic/ornithological world. Self interest is part of many actions, but to see it as the only motive is tantamount to cynicism.

Secondly, Mr Wilde's seizure of the 'River Warbler incident' as an example of universal twitcher bad behaviour is typical of the 'newsreader's' failure to discern what makes 'good news'. The River Warbler incident was extraordinary: it was an ornithological scandal, and that was why we all heard about it. Who wants to hear about the commonplace—the regular and orderly gatherings of hundreds of birders where no damage is ever done, no tempers raised and no social issues highlighted? The unusual and isolated 'River Warbler affair' was important as an example of bad behaviour because it brought home how seldom it happens.

Finally, when Mr Wilde asks 'Does it really matter to anyone with a genuine interest in ornithology that so-and-so had a trial run with so-and-so to see if together they couldn't "score" more than X number of species before breakfast?', could we not reply by asking whether it really matters to anyone if such and such a species breeds in this type of grass as opposed to that, and feeds on two particular types of insect that emerge only in June? Which I suppose is what he means by a 'genuine interest in ornithology'! In fact, does ornithology matter at all in the face of obviously larger impending social disasters? It matters only if you choose to think it matters. Ornithology does not have a strictly defined canon sanctioned by some omnipotent deity. It is a multi-faceted perspective on one branch of the natural world and it seems to me that *British Birds* has a right/duty to reflect as many of those interests as possible. If Mr Wilde finds some of these distasteful, then I suggest he exercises self-restraint and turns the other page.

P. M. COCKER

10 Whitehall Road, Norwich

A few lines are required in response to Mr James Wilde's somewhat hysterical correspondence on the subject of 'twitching' (*Brit. Birds* 75: 136).

He asks 'Who wants to know, for heaven's sake, what so-and-so's personal "score" is?' The answer is obviously not Mr Wilde, but, having been on quite a few 'twitches' ourselves, we know that many birdwatchers

do enjoy exchanging details about their personal lists. And why not, for heaven's sake?

Many of these 'twitchers', who are giving 'the name birdwatcher a bad smell', are taking a full part in breeding bird surveys and contributing many hours of their time to the BTO winter atlas project.

We are sure many birdwatchers will always want to see the rare Asian and Nearctic birds which find their ways to these shores. It will be a sad day indeed, when birdwatchers no longer show that entirely natural enthusiasm and wonderment at the extraordinary journeys of these frail creatures.

ROY TRAVIS, ALLAN TURNER, ALAN KIMBER and IAN KIMBER
188 Smallshaw Lane, Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancashire

Congratulations on your editorial reply to James Wilde's letter (*Brit. Birds* 75: 136).

I'm sick to death of people who seem to think that they are the only genuine birdwatchers and that everyone else should adhere to their viewpoint. Birdwatching is a hobby, and hobbies don't have to be useful, simply enjoyed, by each person in his own way.

ALASTAIR SCOTT
13 Kingsley Gardens, Hornchurch, Essex RM11 2HY

These letters are shortened versions of those submitted. The subject is now closed. EDS

Good behaviour by birders From 30th August to 6th September 1982, there was a Little Whimbrel *Numenius minutus* present on farmland at Sker in Mid Glamorgan. Sker farm is immediately adjacent to the Kenfig local nature reserve of which I am warden. My assistant and I, aided by up to 20 committed volunteers, were in almost constant touch with the bird and with up to 1,400 birdwatchers who saw it during its stay.

The bird's presence on private farmland concerned us initially, and the possibility of an invasion of birders was viewed with horror by the farm-tenants. In fact, because of the setting up of an enthusiastic and helpful wardening service, and the fact that the bird could almost always be viewed from a public footpath, the huge number of visitors to the site resulted in no problems for either the birders, the farm-tenants or the bird. The one exception was a certain notorious twitcher, who walked over private land extensively during his visit to Sker on 31st August, in much the same way that he has done throughout Britain at other rare-bird sites.

Thus, the majority of the birdwatchers were patient, courteous and law-abiding. I realise it is unusual to praise people merely for keeping within the generally accepted code of behaviour, but those of us based at Kenfig feel that this letter takes a step towards redressing the balance, as it is normally only the very few unsavoury incidents which receive publicity.

S. J. MOON

Kenfig Pool and Dunes Local Nature Reserve Centre, Ton Kenfig, near Pyle, Mid Glamorgan CF33 4PT

On behalf of the hundreds who travelled to see and enjoy the Little Whimbrel, we take this opportunity to thank Steve Moon, Wilf Nelson and the rest of the 'Kenfig team' for their viewing and wardening arrangements. Everyone will recognise that misbehaving individuals

could well threaten similar arrangements at future rare bird sites. We again urge that a blind eye is never turned to such misdemeanours. We understand that an on-site collection provided a small gift for the farmer, Rhys Evans, and his son Tony (as a token of thanks for their tolerance of the crowds) and a substantial donation to the Kenfig Watch Club, the local RSNJ junior group. EDS

Twitchers and rare breeding birds Reading the recent letters about twitching (*Brit. Birds* 75: 135, 136) and your comments on them, I feel that one important aspect is being overlooked. I have no wish to condemn twitching, especially where the species involved are migrants and vagrants. My particular concern is for the rare breeding species whose specific or general localities are known to and visited by many birdwatchers. In Norfolk and Suffolk, for instance, there is a well-trodden tour, undertaken annually by many birdwatchers in early summer, which covers the sites of a number of rare breeding species. In some cases, these birds are found on well-wardened reserves where visitors are welcome, so there is no problem. But some species have no regular protection. The visiting birdwatchers can cause problems which are bad for birds, make research difficult and create conservation and management difficulties. Those birdwatchers who do not keep to public footpaths, and trample the areas around nests, alienate landowners and disturb the feeding and nesting pattern of the birds which they have come to see. The extent to which this pressure is responsible for the further decline of species whose ranges are already severely restricted is a matter for speculation, but is, in my view, irrelevant: any avoidable disturbance should be condemned. Most birdwatchers would (and do) argue that they are careful and take efforts not to disturb habitat. While the presence of any one person at a breeding site for an hour or so need not result in damage or disturbance, the problem is that they are joined or followed by hosts of others, and this does result in disturbance. There must be a case for proposing that rare breeding birds should not be sought on a regular basis (except at reserves which invite visitors) and certainly not merely to collect an annual tick.

By comparison, the problems caused by sponsored birdwatches are minimal: usually they involve very responsible individuals and are (by definition) of short duration; participants should, however, always avoid territories of rare breeding birds, as an example to other observers.

MIKE JEANES

27 Errington Road, Colchester CO3 3EA

We—and also the members of the Rare Breeding Birds Panel—agree wholly with Mike Jeanes's suggestions. EDS

Rare breeding birds We feel that we should enlarge upon the remarks made under Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* in 'Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 1981' (*Brit. Birds* 76: 10).

We would certainly not want anybody to get the impression that the RSPB feels it should *automatically* be consulted about breeding Montagu's Harriers, or indeed any other rare species. Unless we are being asked to provide practical help or advice (we will always do our best to do so), or unless our experience in making suitable arrangements with farmers or

landowners could be of some use, there is really no need to get in touch with us. After all, although we have to run a number of protection schemes each year, it is broadly true that the fewer people who know about rare breeding birds the better.

Your otherwise excellent and, we believe, widely accepted 'Code for rarity finders and twitchers' Editorial last year (*Brit. Birds* 75: 301-303) unfortunately made no mention of rare breeding birds and we are therefore pleased that Mike Jeanes (*Brit. Birds* 76: 356) has raised this important subject. We would, however, go farther, and suggest that birdwatchers should exercise the maximum restraint and self discipline where any breeding species is concerned; with *rare* breeding birds, we hold the view that they should be left alone altogether, except where essential monitoring or survey work is involved, or where adequate wardening and viewing facilities exist.

Intentional disturbance of our very rare breeding birds (those on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981) whilst nest building or at or near a nest containing eggs or young is, of course, illegal except under licence; it is also illegal to disturb their dependent young.

Finally, we urge all birdwatchers to be careful about 'loose talk' and the all too easy temptation to boast or talk about breeding rarities. You never know who is listening.

RICHARD PORTER and MIKE EVERETT

Species Protection Department, RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL

Tail moult of Forster's Tern The article on Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri* (*Brit. Birds* 75: 55-61) was generally thorough and accurate. It managed, however, to imply, incorrectly, that the bird's tail is replaced only once per year, in the late-summer annual moult.

A moment's thought makes it obvious that, if renewed in late summer, the long tail-streamers would hardly be in their most presentable condition by the onset of the next breeding season. Actually, as in the cases of various other terns, the tail of Forster's is involved in both the annual (pre-basic or post-nuptial) and the spring (pre-alternate or pre-nuptial) moults. The winter outermost rectrices are not only much shorter than those of summer, but they are also substantially broader, especially towards their bases.

KENN KAUFMAN

2416 East Adams, Tucson, Arizona 85719, USA

Identification of Blyth's Pipit Having travelled over recent years in Nepal, India and Thailand and seen hundreds of pipits that would basically fit the description of Blyth's *Anthus godlewskii* as set out in the note by D. G. H. Mills and N. A. Preston (*Brit. Birds* 75: 381), I—and my companions—have assumed, I think rightly, that the vast majority of such birds are in fact referable to the small, sandy, small-billed local races of Richard's Pipit *A. novaeseelandiae*, often known as 'Paddyfield Pipit'. I am sure that DGHM and NAP would also have considered this possibility, so why are these small races of Richard's not mentioned in their note in comparison with Blyth's?

I hope that a definitive paper on the field identification of Blyth's Pipit is not too far away.

W. E. ODDIE

31 Heathurst Road, London NW3

S. C. Madge has commented as follows: 'As pointed out by WEO, the identification of large pipits in the Far East is far from easy, and greatly hampered by several small races of Richard's Pipits. As he rightly surmises, both authors of the note on the "Identification of Blyth's Pipit" were well aware of this problem, and indeed covered the issue in the first draft of their note. The problem of these small Richard's Pipits is, however, so complex that to give the space to do justice to the subject was beyond the scope of this journal, and the note was edited to suit the practicality of identifying Blyth's Pipit in the West Palearctic. These small races of Richard's are chiefly resident and highly unlikely to turn up in our region; to have included them would perhaps have caused even greater confusion on the large pipit problem, particularly concerning identification of Tawny Pipits *A. campestris*. Birders visiting India and points east get driven to distraction with these birds; no wonder so few really identify 100% *godlewskii* without the aid of nets (or guns!), although "Paddyfield Pipits" are perhaps more easily confused with Tawny Pipits, at least in India.' A paper on the field identification of Blyth's Pipit is in preparation, and we welcome comments on the problem from anyone with experience of the species. Eds

Binocular specification P. J. Grant listed three additional requirements in his favourable 'Product report' on Bushnell Explorer 10×50 binoculars (*Brit. Birds* 75: 574): an adjustable lanyard, a low close focal length and that a carrying case be an optional extra.

I should like to make two other suggestions: (1) a locking device on the 'self-focusing' right eyepiece, and (2) the objectives to be removable (water condenses there after use in heavy rain and may remain for days in cold weather; we can remove lenses from 35 mm cameras and replace them with great accuracy, so why not on a binocular?).

J. F. GRAHAM

Onaway, Church Lane, Hankerton, Malmesbury, Wiltshire SN16 9LF

In memoriam Recently, a chap who is well known to most birders told me he intended to include *British Birds* in his will. He would be embarrassed if I named him. His idea is to bequeath about £1,500 for a trust fund which would ensure adequate annual income in perpetuity to pay for an extra page, in memoriam, once a year. He rather liked the idea of thus being able to greet all his old friends and asking 'What's about . . .?' Perhaps others may like to live on in your pages in the same way?

M. J. ROGERS

195 Vicarage Road, Sunbury-on-Thames, Middlesex TW16 7TP

Announcements

Bill Oddie's new book If you liked *Bill Oddie's Little Black Bird Book*, you will not hesitate to get his new one, due to be published by Methuen on 22nd September. Called *Gone Birding*, it costs £6.95 and, by special arrangement with the publishers, *British Birds* readers can get their copies

promptly and post free (to UK and Eire) by ordering now through British BirdShop (page x).

Reduced subscription rate for foreign members of certain societies

Until now, the reduced subscription rate to *BB* for individual members of bird clubs and societies within our Special Offer Subscription Scheme has been restricted to those members living in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. This is now extended to include foreign members: we are pleased to announce that *all* members of these clubs and societies can now subscribe at the reduced rate (25% off the standard surface mail rate). The bird clubs and societies within the scheme are listed on page vii.

We should like to remind foreign subscribers that we prefer payment in ££ sterling, which is easier for us and cheaper for them, but can also accept payment in US\$\$ at the conversion rate of £1 = \$2.50 (necessitated by the associated high bank charges, banking delays and extra administrative costs).

Reduced subscription rates for young ornithologists We are delighted to be able to continue to offer much-reduced subscription rates for *British Birds* to young ornithologists who are members of the YOC. We should, however, like to point out that the purpose of this is to encourage young birdwatchers to take a serious interest in ornithology and to enable schoolchildren who might otherwise be unable to do so to subscribe to *British Birds*. The subscription rate for members of the YOC is below the cost of producing the journal. We must, therefore, request that adult birdwatchers do not abuse this concession by subscribing in the name of one of their children rather than taking out a subscription themselves. Such abuses could, regrettably, lead to us having to discontinue what we regard as a service to ornithology.

Colour-ringed, colour-marked and wing-tagged birds The number of different international, national, local and individual marking schemes is now legion. We frequently get requests from researchers for inclusion of a 'Request' concerning their particular study, but space prevents the inclusion of the majority of these. We have been hoping for some time that there would be a central register of such schemes, to avoid overlap and duplication of marking, together with one address to which sightings should be reported. This has not been achieved, but a very great step forward was made within *Birdwatcher's Yearbook 1983* (pages 279-280), where four addresses were given for the reporting of sightings of birds with colour rings, wing tags, dye marks and so on. We reproduce these below, with grateful acknowledgment to John E. Pemberton for permission to do so.

WADERS: Wader Study Group, Dr Dave Townshend, Zoology Department, Durham University, South Road, Durham DH1 3LE.

GULLS: Gull Study Group, Dr C. Thomas, Zoology Department, Durham University, South Road, Durham DH1 3LE.

SWANS AND GESE (except Canada Geese): Dr Malcolm Ogilvie, Wildfowl Trust, Slimbridge, Gloucester GL2 7BT.

ALL OTHER SPECIES: Adrian Cawthorne, BTO, Beech Grove, Station Road, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 5NR.

News and comment

Mike Everett and Robin Prytherch

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

Arrested birdwatchers The detention in early June of two English birdwatchers, Simon Albrecht and Dennis Buisson, whilst birdwatching in Turkey (*Brit. Birds* 76: 321) has been received with much concern by ornithologists in Britain. They were visiting the Meric River (which divides Turkey and Greece) having obtained written permission from the Turkish Army. Later, they were arrested, pending enquiries into their travelling, birdwatching and taking photographs in a military zone without permission. After two weeks in prison, they were released on bail. At the time of writing (12th July), they have just faced another hearing, at which the enquiry was further adjourned because their film, which was confiscated, had not yet been developed.

It is difficult to comment until the full story is known, but any birdwatchers going to Turkey would be well advised to contact the Turkish Embassy in London to discuss their trip beforehand. (*Contributed by R. F. Porter*)

Birds of Oman It is good news that *The Birds of Oman* by Michael Gallagher and Martin W. Woodcock is now available in paperback at the remarkably low price of £12.50. The original hard-cover edition (reviewed in *Brit. Birds* 74: 406) was rather too expensive for birdwatchers not actually visiting Oman; now, many others will be able to enjoy this important guide to the birds of a fascinating area of eastern Arabia lying at the junction of three zoogeographical regions, with, besides its own resident avifauna, many migrants and seabirds. The text is accurate and the paintings most pleasing. An Arabic edition is in preparation. (*Contributed by SC*)

Raptor bulletin The ICBP World Working Group on Birds of Prey published its first Bulletin in March 1983. Its 240 pages cover a wide range of current topics, including population censuses, conservation programmes, protection problems, international smuggling, and conference reports, from many different countries. This twice-yearly bulletin is available, £4.50 or \$7.00 post free, from ICBP, c/o British Museum (Natural History), Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD.

Shorebird Workshop The Sixth International Workshop on the Ecology of Shorebirds will be held under the auspices of the International Waterfowl Research Bureau at University College, Cardiff, during 12th-16th September 1983. The emphasis will be on studies of wading birds during the breeding season, and the programme will include speakers from Britain, Canada, the Netherlands, Israel, Norway, South Africa and the USA. Details and booking forms may be obtained from: Dr P. N. Ferns, Zoology Department, University College, Cardiff CF1 1XL, or Dr J. D. Goss-Custard, Furzebrook Research Station, Wareham, Dorset BH20 5AS.

Mallorca guide: 2nd edition The late Eddie Watkinson's famous *A Guide to Birdwatching in Mallorca* is now available in a much revised and expanded second edition. This booklet is a classic of its kind: if only its lead could be followed in other European bird hotspots! The 20 introductory pages contain general information covering everything the visitor could possibly wish to know, and a further 38 cover site descriptions, with clear maps for all the island's major birding areas. During the main birdwatching seasons, Pat Watkinson, Eddie's wife, runs popular twice-weekly get-togethers for birdwatchers in Puerto Pollensa, essential for finding out about the latest good birds, and a very pleasant social evening into the bargain. The Watsonkins' work in helping birdwatching visitors and groups, through their book and freely given assistance, has done much to popularise birdwatching on the island. This directly strengthens the hand of local wildlife conservationists, much needed against ever-present commercial interests. If you are planning a first or return visit, this booklet is essential. If you are wondering where to spend your next foreign birding holiday, it will probably persuade you to try Mallorca: you will not be disappointed! Copies can be obtained, postage included, for £3.00 (in sterling cheque or postal order payable to Pat Watkinson), direct from Pat Watkinson, Apartado 72, Puerto Pollensa, Mallorca, Balcares, Spain. (*Contributed by PJG*)



152. Presentation of Bird Photograph of the Year award to David M. Cottridge by Eric Hosking, May 1983 (*R. J. Chandler*)

Bird Photograph of the Year At the Press Reception at The Scotch Whisky Association in London on 19th May, the Red Grouse trophy and a cheque for £100 were presented to the winning photographer, David M. Cottridge, by Eric Hosking (plate 152). The competition was again sponsored by Matthew Gloag and Son Ltd, proprietors of The Famous Grouse scotch whisky.

'American Birds' success A one-page advertisement in *Audubon*, January 1983 (circulation 368,644) brought to *American Birds* 1,718 new subscribers by 12th April 1983, raising its circulation to about 16,000. The ad was written by the Editor, Robert Arbib, a former full-time advertising copywriter (and speech-writer for Eisenhower and Adlai Stevenson). It brought him fan mail from Roger Tory Peterson and others. Part of it read: "American Birds is fascinating . . . I read every issue couvert to couvert!"—Jean Jacques Audubon, "how much easier my life's work if only *American Birds* had been there! It tells me the best places to seek birds in Amerique du Nord, and even Sud. How to tell those difficile species apart without using

my shotgun. Beautiful paintings by artists even more masterful than I. That Fuertes, mon Dieu what realisme! And this new marvel, photographie en couleur—I cannot believe my eyes . . . *American Birds* tells me what birds have been found in every season everywhere from Attu (where is that?) to the Antilles, where I was born. Articles on the dynamique of bird distributions, populations, on migration and all sortes of subjects new to me. And the Noël Bird Count, fantastique! So many thousands of personnes—the birding event la plus grande of the world. Original bound-in recordings, book and record reviews, tour listings, surveys scientifiques . . . quel journal! You are so lucky to be alive in the era of *American Birds*, fig newtons and indoor plumbing!" (Contributed by Jeffery Boswall)

Öko-ornithologisches Glossarium We have recently received promotion literature concerning a German-English and English-German glossary of ornithological/ecological terms. The leaflet contained a paragraph in

English by Stanley Cramp, who also wrote the book's introduction, and part of the preface by the authors (Rudolf Berndt and Wolfgang Winkel), in English as well as in German. One wonders, however, at the publishers' common sense, when the accompanying explanatory letter sent to the *BB* office is wholly in German. If we could translate it easily, we presumably would not need their glossary . . .!

The *Glossarium* costs DM30 from Duncker & Humblot, Dietrich-Schäfer-Weg 9, Postfach 41 03 29, 1000 Berlin 41.

'Country Life' hat-trick The now annual Record Birdwatch brought victory for the third successive year to the *Country Life* team, with 155 species seen or heard on 14th May: two more than in 1982. The Fauna and Flora Preservation Society team, led by Bill Oddie, made 145. More details next month . . .

OSME news Bulletin 10 (Spring 1983) of the Ornithological Society of the Middle East contains the important news of the establishment of a Sites Register Scheme, which sets out to record important ornithological sites in the region, leading on to an assessment of conservation priorities and possibilities. The scheme deserves your support, if you are birding anywhere in the Middle East, or already know of a site which should go on record. OSME is also setting up a system of grants towards conservation-orientated fieldwork projects, starting in 1984. Further details are available from OSME, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

Twitching 1940s style We are grateful to Andrew Collins for drawing our attention to the following, which appeared in *World of Birds* by Eric Parker, published in 1941: 'A few days after the news of the Oriole came another message, this time not by post but by telephone. A Grey Phalarope had been seen on Cutmill Pond; if I wished to see it the sender of the message would try to let me know whether it was still there. My first thought was how to get to Cutmill Pond, which meant a journey of some eight miles . . . It was towards the end of the month and I had hardly any petrol left out of my monthly allowance. Was the bird still there? I could get no message through; air raids day and night blocked the telephone and on the top of air-raids came a storm of wind—my tele-

phone runs miles through woodland—and broke the line. At last the message came through: the bird had gone.'

New publications New county reports include *Birds in Durham 1981* (£2.00 from Durham Bird Club, c/o D. L. Sowerbutts, 9 Prebends Field, Gilesgate Moor, Durham DH1 1HH); *Lincolnshire Bird Report 1981* (£2.00 from Lincolnshire Bird Club, c/o Anne Goodall, 3 Kettleby View, Brigg, South Humberside DN20 8UD); and, a newcomer to the list, *The Pembrokeshire Bird Report 1981* (79p over the counter or £1.00 by post from West Wales Naturalists' Trust, 7 Market Street, Haverfordwest, Dyfed).

New albatross As a change from things found in Peru, it is pleasant to be able to report the discovery of a new species of albatross, described by J.-P. Roux *et al.* (1983, *L'Oiseau et la Revue Française d'Ornithologie* 53: 1-11). Confined to Amsterdam Island in the Terres Australes et Antarctiques Françaises, it has been named *Diomedea amsterdamensis*, the Amsterdam Albatross. Its population is thought to be only 30-50 individuals: this probably represents all that remains of a once-larger population, reduced in the sadly familiar way of isolated island species by the depredations of man and his introduced animals. Its long-delayed discovery by ornithologists is partly due to these very small numbers, but also to the fact that its main breeding season (and therefore its presence ashore) is in the southern winter.

William Wilkinson Our warmest congratulations go to William Wilkinson on his recent appointment as Chairman of the Nature Conservancy Council: a difficult post, but one we are sure he will fill with his customary dedication and verve. We wish him every success.

New Chairman of EOAC After serving for more than ten years, Dr J. T. R. Sharrock has resigned as Chairman of the European Ornithological Atlas Committee. The new Chairman is S. M. Taylor, whose term as President of the BTO will shortly be concluding, thereby giving him time for these new responsibilities. The EOAC's continent-wide breeding bird atlas project will be taking place during 1985-88. The next meeting of the EOAC will be at the joint IBCC/EOAC Conference at Newland Park College, Chalfont St Giles, Buckinghamshire, during 5th-9th September 1983.

Much-travelled seabirder You might think that, after having spent eight years travelling the world's oceans in search of information for his recently published *Sea-birds: an identification guide*, Peter Harrison would be content to settle for a while at his near-Land's-End home. Not so! After the launch party for the book on 7th April, he departed two days later for Cape Town; on 14th April was heading for Marion and Prince Edward Islands in Antarctica; returned to Cape Town in late May to spend the month of June as an observer on a South African Research Vessel following the 49th Parallel to the Brazilian coast and back; then July watching seabirds near Luderitz off Western Cape; during August he will be off inland to Okovango Swamp in Botswana; he plans to spend September on Tristan da Cunha; and aims to return to Cape Town and then to Penzance in early October. This seems to be a typical itinerary for Peter Harrison: when does he find time to write and paint? (*Contributed by JTRS*)

That historic gathering The specially contrived get-together of those field-guide men, Dr Roger Tory Peterson, Guy Mountfort and P. A. D. Hollom, at the RSPB Members' Weekend at Warwick in April 1983 (*Brit. Birds* 76: 321), was captured on film by that other GOM to whom we owe so much, Eric Hosking (see plate 153). The fourth edition of their classic field guide, with new colour plates replacing the old ones in black-and-white, is published by Collins this month, and is available through British BirdShop (see page x).

'Secrets of the Coast' Readers may care to look out for a new series of seven natural history programmes on ITV beginning on Sunday 7th August. It is produced by David Cobham, with Su Ingle as the presenter. One programme is devoted to the Peregrine's return to Cornwall, and features Dick Treleven and HRH The Prince of Wales, as well as some spectacular Peregrine shots.

Black Vultures A report on the 1982 census of Black Vultures *Aegypius monachus* in Mallorca (see *Brit. Birds* 76: 183) is now available (free if you send an A4-sized stamped addressed envelope) from A. S. Richford and J. M. Platt, 22 Canning Road, Highbury, London N5.

New Recorder for Buckinghamshire John Marchant, 17 Church View, Long Marston, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 1QB, has taken over from Ron Youngman as Recorder for Buckinghamshire.

New recorder for Northumberland Mike S. Hodgson, 45 Elmtree Gardens, Whitley Bay, Tyne & Wear, has taken over from Alan Heavisides as recorder for Northumberland.

Can you beat Young Ornithologists at their own game? Members of the YOC who are entering the competition to find the Young Ornithologists of the Year, which is again sponsored by *British Birds*, have to submit their field notebooks for perusal by the judges, but also have to answer a series of

153. P. A. D. Hollom, Dr Roger Tory Peterson and Guy Mountfort, April 1983 (*Eric & David Hosking*)



questions to test their ornithological knowledge. If you would like to pit your wits against the up-and-coming generation of birders, have a shot at this set of 12 questions:

In each of these 12 sets, all but one of the birds have something in common. Find the 'odd one out' in each set, and say why.

1. Chiffchaff, Chough, Cuckoo, Curlew, Kittiwake, Wryneck
2. Dotterel, Hobby, Little Ringed Plover, Meadow Pipit, Osprey, Ring Ouzel, Roseate Tern, Swift, Whinchat, White-throat, Yellow Wagtail
3. Chiffchaff, Dipper, Dunnock, Long-tailed Tit, Magpie, Wren
4. Blackcap, Chaffinch, Girl Bunting, Golden Oriole, Hen Harrier, House Sparrow, Kestrel, Mallard, Pheasant, Redstart, Tree Sparrow
5. Canada Goose, Egyptian Goose, Little Owl, Mandarin, Pheasant, Red-legged Partridge, Ruddy Duck, Slavonian Grebe
6. Black Guillemot, Brambling, Little Grebe, Pied Flycatcher, Ptarmigan, Red-throated Diver, Reed Bunting, Robin, Ruff
7. Bimaculated Lark, Blackbird, Brünich's Guillemot, Common Nighthawk, Forster's Tern, Gray's Grasshopper Warbler, Long-tailed Tit, Ovenbird, Siberian Rubythroat
8. Bonelli's Warbler, Fan-tailed Warbler, Melodious Warbler, Moustached Warbler, Orphean Warbler, Pallas's Warbler, Sedge Warbler, Spectacled Warbler, Willow Warbler, Yellow Warbler
9. Collared Pratincole, Common Sandpiper, Greenfinch, Pallid Swift, Red Kite, Redpoll, Sabine's Gull, Sandwich Tern, Swallow
10. Brambling, Bullfinch, Collared Flycatcher, Goldfinch, Green Sandpiper, Hen Harrier, House Martin, Rock Dove, Storm Petrel, Tufted Duck, Wheatear, Woodchat Shrike
11. Bee-eater, Black Redstart, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Kingfisher, Manx Shearwater, Sand Martin, Willow Tit
12. Cormorant, Gadwall, Garganey, Great Skua, Greylag Goose, Lapwing, Little Grebe, Mallard, Pochard, Quail, Red-throated Diver

The answers will be published in *BB* when this year's YOC competition has closed.

Recent reports

K. Allsopp and R. A. Hume

These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records

Dates in this report refer to May except where stated otherwise.

The weather during the month was dominated by slow-moving depressions crossing the country, bringing unsettled, very wet and cool conditions, the air spiralling in to the low-pressure centres, giving an ever-changing pattern of wind directions. The unsettled weather also extended across Europe, disrupting the late spring migrants and resulting in an unusual variety of species being reported across the British Isles.

The cool conditions also delayed the emergence of insects, and **hirundines** and **Swifts** *Apus apus* were noticeably absent from their breeding haunts, often congregating in large numbers over the reservoirs. An active weather front lying east-west over the south

of England moved slowly north during the first few days of the month and formed an effective barrier to small migrants; this resulted in a large fall of birds on the Channel Islands, but very few at English south coast observatories. The most noticeable migrant affected was the **Arctic Tern** *Sterna paradisaea*, which descended in unprecedented numbers at Midland reservoirs on 2nd, with flocks of over 50 at most localities, a staggering 520 at Chasewater (Staffordshire) and 369 at Fairburn Ings (North Yorkshire). The cool air over the country, originating from the Arctic and brought on north to northwest winds in mid Atlantic, resulted in impressive inshore movements of **skuas** *Stercorarius* on western coasts. During the first two weeks, **Pomarine Skuas** *S. pomarinus*

were reported in flocks of over 300 in south-west Ireland, and later in the Western Isles, where at Balranald (North Uist) 436 were counted on 19th, with 119, 182, and 49 on succeeding days. A total of 122 passed South Stack (Anglesey) between 8th and 22nd, with 45 on 21st. In comparison, the numbers moving through the English Channel and North Sea were very low, with only ten seen at Dungeness (Kent) the whole month. At Balranald, the movement included **Long-tailed Skuas** *S. longicaudus*, 56 on 19th, 10 on 20th, 271 on 21st, 67 of which were over the reserve, and a further 50 on 22nd. This species was also seen at South Stack, with one on 21st and two on 22nd. Two **White-billed Divers** *Gavia adamsii* were also seen at Balranald on 21st. A party of six **Common Scoters** *Melanitta nigra* moving across country were accompanied by a male **Surf Scoter** *M. perspicillata* when they halted briefly at Hemingsford Grey (Cambridgeshire) on 5th June.

Gulls and marsh terns

The annual pattern of vagrants continues to change as birds turn up when they are not

supposed to. An adult **Ross's Gull** *Rhodostethia rosea* at Sligo Bay (Co. Sligo) on 6th and a **Laughing Gull** *Larus atricilla* inland at Fairburn Ings on 3rd were surprise visitors. A few **Black Terns** *Chlidonias niger* passed through the country, and there was one report of a **White-winged Black Tern** *C. leucopterus*, from Spurn (Humberside) on 29th. Of less regular occurrence were reports of **Whiskered Tern** *C. hybridus*, from Chew Valley Lake (Avon) with two present on 29th, following one on 28th at Sutton Bingham Reservoir (Somerset), and of **Gull-billed Tern** *Gelochelidon nilotica*, with one at Holme (Norfolk) on 11th.

Sunshine birds

Flashes of brilliance enlightened many a grey day, with **Hoopoes** *Upupa epops* being reported throughout the month, scattered around the country, with three together at Holme on 15th, and the seven **Bee-eaters**



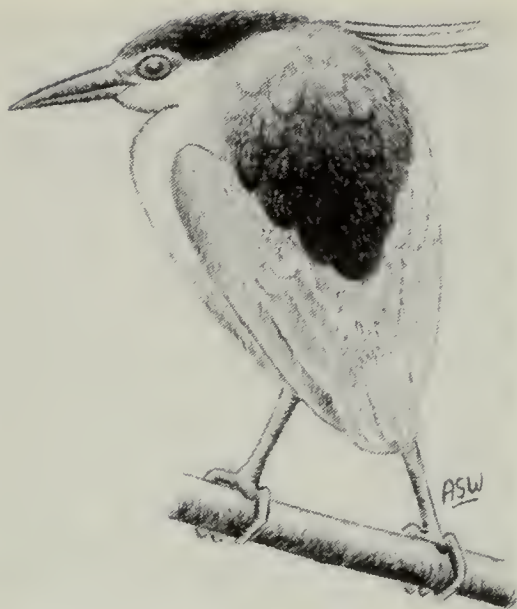
Merops apiaster which drew many visitors to the Isles of Scilly from 4th were followed by records from Valentia Isle (Co. Kerry), with seven on 17th, Fairburn Ings, one on 29th and 30th, two others at Cley (Norfolk) and reports from Radipole Lake (Dorset).

Golden Orioles *Oriolus oriolus*, not to be outshone, were regular weekend visitors at Dungeness (Kent), and westerly reports were received of two at Walney (Cumbria), two in Ireland, and one on the Mull of Kintyre (Argyll) on 26th.

An **Alpine Swift** *Apus melba* was a regular sight at Wraybury Reservoir (Berkshire) for most of the month, and another was seen at Dungeness on 8th.

Wading birds

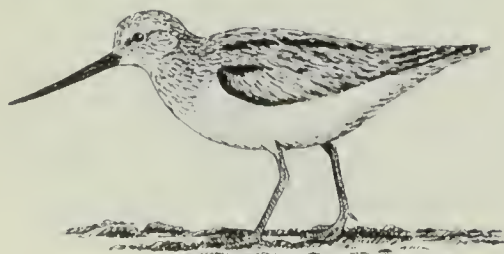
Perhaps the three **Black-winged Stilts** *Himantopus himantopus* reported last month leaving from Marazion (Cornwall) were those reported on 3rd from Frodsham (Cheshire), while another report came from the Nene Washes (Cambridgeshire). The Norfolk coast was the magnet for waderwatchers, with a **Baird's Sandpiper** *Calidris bairdii* at Titchwell on 14th, and, at Cley, a **Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularia* on 22nd and 23rd, a **Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus* from 23rd to 29th, and then a **Marsh Sandpiper** *Tringa stagnatilis* on 30th. A **Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Limicola falcinellus* was reported from Stranraer (Dumfries & Galloway) and a Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor* at Minsmere (Suffolk) provided an unusual spring record on 6th June. Other Nearctic species featured were a **Greater Yellowlegs** *Tringa melanoleuca* which joined an overwintering **Lesser Yellowlegs** *T. flavipes* at Tralee Bay (Co. Kerry) at the end of April. Another exotic species, the **Collared Pratincole** *Glareola pratincola*, delighted many observers at Girtford gravel-pit (Bedfordshire) from 19th to 23rd (plates 156 & 157), and another (or perhaps the same?) was present at Hollingworth Lake (Greater Manchester) from 30th into early June (plates 158 & 159). Of the larger wading birds, **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* must be one of our rarest vagrants and



one reported from Coombes Valley (Staffordshire) on 29th might well have been the same as one reported from Biggar (Strathclyde) on 1st June. Equally rare was a **Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* which arrived at Cley on 28th. Other wandering herons included **Little Egrets** *Egretta garzetta* at Sandy Haven (Dyfed), Cuckmere (East Sussex) on 8th, Heybridge (Essex) on 13th and Skokholm (Dyfed) on 18th, and five reports of **Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax*, from Cley, Tewkesbury (Gloucestershire), Southport (Merseyside) (plate 155), Wraybury (plate 154) and Rimac (Lincolnshire), with the last locality also hosting a **Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea*.

Passerine wanderers

The disruptive weather brought in vagrants associated more with autumn than spring. **Red-breasted Flycatchers** *Ficedula parva* were seen at Clogherhead (Co. Louth) on 7th and at Spurn from 23rd to 25th, and a **Little Bunting** *Emberiza pusilla* at Great Saltee (Co. Wexford) on 7th, following an earlier report of one at Adswold (Greater Manchester) from 24th April onwards. **Scarlet Rosefinches** *Carpodacus erythrinus* were also displaced westward from northern or eastern Europe, arriving at Fair Isle, with two on 25th, one at Spurn on 30th and one at Dungeness on 4th June. Similar displacement movements occurred with **Thrush Nightingales** *Luscinia luscinia*, with reports of singles in Shetland and in Orkney, two on Fair Isle (12th and 15th-18th), one on the Isle of May (Fife) on 16th, and another at Bamburgh (Northumberland) on 22nd; and with **Red-throated Pipits** *Anthus cervinus*,



with two on Alderney (Channel Islands) on 1st and another in Shetland. Also of easterly origin was a **Rose-coloured Starling** *Sturnus roseus* at Holme on 3rd June. Southern European species also lost their way: another **Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita* with characteristics of the Spanish race *ibericus* was found in Somerset on 29th April, following last month's reported find earlier that month at Lodmoor (Dorset). **Subalpine Warblers** *Sylvia cantillans* arrived within a few days of each other at Gibraltar Point (Lincolnshire) and South Ronaldsay (Orkney) on 7th, and at Hook Head (Co. Wexford) on 8th, and at Fife Ness early in the month; later, there was one in Scilly on 22nd-24th. There was also a scattering of **Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius senator* records from western areas, and **Serins** *Serinus serinus* were found at Selsey Bill (West Sussex) on 5th, Spurn on 8th, Dungeness on 26th and Salthouse (Norfolk) on 30th. Single southern rarities included a **Red-rumped Swallow** *Hirundo daurica* at Portland (Dorset) on 14th-15th, a **Rock Thrush** *Monticola saxatilis* at Graveley (Hertfordshire) on 8th, a **Black-headed Bunting** *Emberiza melanocephala* at Dungeness on 14th, a **Pied Wheatear** *Oenanthe pleschanka* at Wells (Norfolk) on 26th and 27th, and a **Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella cinerea* at Spurn on 25th. Complete surprises were three American birds: a **White-throated Sparrow** *Zonotrichia albicollis* at Spurn on 12th and **Slate-coloured Juncos** *Junco hyemalis* at Wellington (Hampshire) in mid month and at Longford Budville (Somerset) on 21st, although these do fit with previous spring records of Nearctic seed-eaters.



Birds-of-prey records were surprisingly few, but included a **Black Kite** *Milvus migrans* at Dungeness on 8th, following the report of one in Kent late last month, and another at Rhosneigr (Anglesey) in mid-month. **Marsh Harriers** *Circus aeruginosus* were regularly seen at Spurn throughout the month.

Recent rarities decisions

The main purpose of this feature is to report the acceptance and non-acceptance of records of birds considered to be of interest to birdwatchers. The data are supplied by courtesy of Robert Hudson and the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee and Michael J. Rogers and the British Birds Rarities Committee. All such records will still be published in the usual manner in the annual 'Report on rare birds in Great Britain'. 'Recent rarities decisions' is compiled by Peter Lansdown and will be of frequent, though not always monthly, occurrence.

The record of two **Cory's Shearwaters** *Calonectris diomedea* off St Agnes (Scilly) in October 1979 was not accepted. Three **Barrow's Goldeneyes** *Bucephala islandica*, all accepted regarding identification, are considered to relate to escapes from captivity: an immature drake at Wallasey (Merseyside) from May to September 1977, a drake at Abberton Reservoir (Essex) in April and May 1979, and a drake at Bewl Bridge Reservoir (East Sussex/Kent) from January to March 1979 and from December 1979 to April 1980. The drake at Irvine (Strathclyde) in November and December 1979, however, has been accepted into Category D of the British and Irish list. The record of **White-headed Duck** *Oxyura leucocephala* at Blithfield Reservoir (Staffordshire) from December 1980 to January 1981 has been withdrawn by the observers as it was considered possibly a hybrid White-headed Duck/Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis*. Two records of **White-tailed Eagles** *Haliaeetus albicilla* have been accepted as probably relating to wild individuals, although the possibility of captive or introduced origin cannot be wholly excluded: a second-year in the Minsmere/Sizewell area (Suffolk) in January 1982 and an immature at Thorne Moors (Humberside) in February and March 1982. It is not known if the adult **Hudsonian Godwit** *Limosa haemastica* at Blacktoft Sands (Humberside) in September and October 1981 was the same as the one at Countess Wear (Devon) from November 1981 to January 1982, but both records have been accepted into Category A of the British and Irish list. A **Pacific Swift** *Apus pacificus* picked up on a gas platform 45 km northeast of Happisburgh (Norfolk), released at Beccles (Suffolk) and seen at Shaddingfield (Norfolk) in June 1981 has been accepted into Category A of the British and Irish list. The record of **Blyth's Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus dumetorum* on Bryher (Scilly) in November 1977 has been abandoned by the observers.



154 & 155. Night Herons *Nycticorax nycticorax*, May 1983: above, Berkshire (David M. Cottridge); below, Merseyside (Steve Young)





156-159. Collared Pratincoles *Glareola pratincola*, May 1983: above, Bedfordshire (David M. Cottridge); below, Greater Manchester (I. Kimber)



Transparencies request

Anyone with high-quality colour transparencies of a 1982 rarity is asked to loan the original to us for possible use (perhaps in colour) in the next rarities report. To be considered, transparencies must arrive with Dr J. T. R. Sharrock (Fountains, Park Lane,

Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ) by 20th August.

Latest news

During first half July: **Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus* at Lakenheath (Suffolk). **Crane** *Grus grus* in Shetland, and **Terek Sandpiper** at Langstone Harbour (Hampshire).

Reviews

The Shell Guide to the Birds of Britain and Ireland. By James Ferguson-Lees, Ian Willis and J. T. R. Sharrock. Michael Joseph, London, 1983. 336 pages; 1,800 coloured illustrations. £7.95.

The publisher's description on the back cover claims, with justification, that this is the most comprehensive portable guide to the birds of the British Isles ever produced. Some two-thirds of the book deals with 263 regular British birds and a further quarter covers vagrant species in slightly less detail; only those species recorded before 1931 or after 1980 are excluded (1982, that annus mirabilis, must have been something of a shock to the authors). Thirty pages are taken up with descriptions of 15 bird habitats. The layout of the book is not uniform: the illustrations appear either below or on the right-hand page facing the text; I much prefer the latter arrangement. The text is by James Ferguson-Lees, the illustrations by Ian Willis, and the distribution maps by Dr J. T. R. Sharrock.

As may be expected, given the book's limited scope, the text is much fuller than that in other field guides, with brief notes on the breeding (where relevant) and the food of the main species. For the regular species, each double-page spread generally deals with only two or three (sometimes four) species, and a handful (e.g. Honey Buzzard) have a whole spread to themselves. Vagrants are allowed about half this space, but are still covered as fully—or more so—as in rival guides. The first sentence of each of the accounts outlines the general characters of the species, concentrating on shape and the more obvious plumage features. The second sentence describes general behaviour. A major feature is the detailed descriptions of plumage and moults, which ambitiously seeks to describe the birds' entire range of plumages. This inevitably makes great demands on the book's illustrator, the printer, the expertise of the observer and, not least, the co-operativeness of the birds themselves. The text is so artfully compressed that not a word seems superfluous, yet it is both authoritative and very thorough. One could quibble with some points: I think, for instance, that the persistent hovering of Rough-legged Buzzard deserved a qualified mention, particularly as it is said of Buzzard that it 'sometimes hovers'.

With 1,800 illustrations of 488 species, it is remarkable how few fail to match the exacting standards demanded by the text. There are failures, and there is a general tendency for the birds to be too 'washed out', but it would be misleading to catalogue odd errors as the standard is very high. Indeed, in this reviewer's opinion, the illustrations are superior to those in two of the major field guides, and at least the equal of Peterson's. As may be expected from Ian Willis, the birds of prey are particularly fine. In common with the text, the restricted scope of the book allows a more generous provision of illustrations: many species are shown in five or six separate studies. One major improvement would be the addition of separate plates showing waders, ducks and raptors in flight, to assist comparisons. In addition, I would have preferred the birds to have been depicted on suitably tinted backgrounds, as white, or predominantly white, birds tend to merge into the stark white backgrounds which thus obscure their shapes. One benefit of the illustrations is that they at last acknowledge that birds in fresh and worn plumage vary—sometimes markedly so.

The maps show the British and Irish distribution of regularly occurring species whilst breeding, on passage and wintering. The breeding distribution of some rarer species has been deliberately enlarged for reasons of clarity and security. The maps work well for the commoner species, by and large, but they do tend to overstate the position of some rarer migrants and thus obscure the areas where they are most likely to be found. For example, Red Kite is depicted as a migrant throughout the south of England and East Anglia, which is rather misleading (in the 25 years up to 1976, only 13 Red Kites were reported in my home county of Kent, whilst Purple Heron which, as a vagrant, is not mapped, was three times as frequent). In fairness, the optimism of the maps is moderated by textual notes on range and by a simple scale of abundance indicating the species' frequency as breeding birds, winter visitors, spring and autumn migrants. This nine point decimal scale of abundance, which ranges from 0 = usually none to 8 = 10 million plus, is an excellent idea but perhaps needed a fuller explanation. A novice birdwatcher might well consider that a migrant that falls into the third order of magnitude (i.e. 101-1,000) is tolerably frequent, whereas such birds (Ortolan Bunting, Barred

Warbler, Red-breasted Flycatcher, Yellow-browed Warbler, etc.) are rare enough to be something special. The frequency of vagrants is indicated by raw totals. This is an advance, but perhaps an indication of those species that are annual, and their usual frequency per annum would have been more helpful.

This is an excellent volume which at last recognises that, whilst birds are free to range across Europe unhindered, birdwatchers' migrations tend to be more circumscribed. Some may object to the space given over to vagrants, but keen (or twitching) birdwatchers will be grateful for a guide that does not fail them just when it is most needed. The survey of bird habitats will be useful to the beginner, but the more experienced might have preferred the space given over to the remaining non-British European species, so they might have had the benefit of this book's thorough treatment whilst abroad. Even so, and despite the present limitations, it would be an unwise birdwatcher who failed to take this book on his Continental holiday; but it is as a field guide to British birds that this valuable book is unmatched. The authors are to be congratulated on both detecting and handsomely filling a previously unmet need, even in the saturated field guide market.

J. CANTELO

Seabirds: an identification guide. By Peter Harrison. Croom Helm, 1983. 448 pages; 88 colour plates, 312 maps and many line-drawings. £15.95.

Peter Harrison spent eight years travelling the globe taking photographs and making detailed notes and sketches of the world's seabirds. The culmination of this extensive fieldwork and much background research is this concisely titled book. It is a monumental one-man piece of work aimed at the field birder (should I say sea-birder) and I cannot recommend it too highly: it is superb.

The brief introductory chapter outlines the problems of identifying birds at sea and also gives useful clues to the techniques involved; the author does not, however, pretend that seabirds are easy, and underlines the fact that everything is against the observer (range, light, and moving vessel on a moving sea) and quite openly states that 'my own list of personal odd jobs is quite extensive'.

I find it rather surprising that such a book, aimed at use in often poor weather conditions, should have such a conventional cover/dust jacket combination. Surely it would have been more useful to have had a more modern 'weatherproof' cover, which is so popular with field guides these days? This is perhaps a minor problem, as the rest of the book has been carefully planned to be of the utmost use in the field, with plates arranged (so far as possible) to include similar species which might occur together, and with plenty of cross references between plates, text and maps.

One of the major problems when planning this book must have been deciding just what constitutes a 'seabird', and the line has been taken to include all species within a family selected for inclusion. Some of the species have probably never seen the sea, and this falls down particularly badly with deciding to include the grebes, where certain flightless species (restricted to Andean lakes) are included! Waterfowl must also have been a great problem, as the coastal species have been relegated to three black-and-white pages of drawings at the rear of the book. Personally, I would rather have seen the grebes and this waterfowl selection left out entirely for the sake of including more detail on other difficult species groups.

The colour plates cover main plumages of all species and distinct subspecies of seabirds. They have been arranged with facing caption pages allowing quick reference for the user to locate useful field features; symbols indicate regions where the bird is likely to be encountered, and species numbering helps group the figures on the plate. Some of the plates are rather crowded and I would gladly have had an extra plate or two of, say, skuas and large gulls at the expense of the grebes, as mentioned above. The author freely admits that he went to art school purely for the sake of doing the plates in this book, and his technique seems to have developed through the work—compare the wooden-looking shearwaters of plate 28 with the more 'alive' ones on plate 31. The plates are, however, far more complete than—and far superior to—those of any other seabird guide, and adequately cover a variety of plumages and postures within each species. With such a diverse subject and many plumage features being relatively unknown from the field identification angle, no doubt there is room for improvement within

some of the more difficult groups. I find it rather odd, for example, that standing adult Red-legged Kittiwake has dark legs, and would have expected an underside view of a flying adult Mediterranean Gull, instead of two uppersides.

The text contains some masterly summaries of some of the problematic groups, especially useful being the discussions of the albatrosses and the frigatebirds, the latter being treated with full-page line-drawings of plumage stages of each species. The changing ideas of seabird taxonomists have been anticipated, and several well-marked with subspecies have been given semi-specific accounts (anyone going to split Balearic Shearwater now?). Just as the book appears on the book-shelves, however, we hear that the forthcoming AOU checklist now splits Yellow-footed Gull *Larus livens* from Western Gull *L. occidentalis*, and Least Tern *Sterna antillarum* from Little Tern *S. albigrons*: both splits being too late for fuller accounts to be given in *Seabirds*.

The text layout has been arranged for utmost use in the field, commencing with a brief paragraph outlining the major features of a species along with its most potential confusion species. This is followed by a summary of the plumage details of each stage, a useful paragraph on behaviour, flight methods and miscellaneous features which aid identification (entitled 'Flight, habits and jizz') and ending with sections on distribution and movements, and similar species. The text is very full, and more complete in coverage than in other field guides. I note, however, that the legs of Grey Phalarope have been described and illustrated as grey in breeding plumage, when they are generally recognised as being yellowish.

The maps are in a section at the rear of the book, and they have been printed on several scales, which allows for more precise location of the restricted species ranges. They have printed very clearly and seem accurate, although I noticed that the breeding range of Indian Black-headed Gull is completely wrong (it really breeds in an area of Central Asia centred on the Tibetan plateau) and that the breeding range of Chinese Black-headed Gull is confidently given in eastern China, even though the breeding range is still unknown (although reputed to be there, this is unconfirmed); both these ranges are also given incorrectly in Tuck & Heinzel's *Field Guide to the Seabirds of Britain and the World*. Star symbols have also been used to denote where vagrants have occurred, but they seem to have been used rather indiscriminately as many species which have occurred in Britain as vagrants lack any such symbol.

Typographical errors have crept in from time to time and seem to have slipped through due to inadequate checking: for instance, I noticed 'Balearic Shearwater' and 'Dalmation Pelican' on the map captions, 'Phalropes' on page 16, and the index map reference to Silver Gull comes out at Ring-billed Gull.

These are, however, only minor criticisms. Peter Harrison's *Seabirds* will be a standard work of reference for many years. I cannot recommend it too highly and urge everyone with an interest in bird identification to buy a copy. It is far superior to any other seabird guide on the market today.

S. C. MADGE

Flight of the Storm Petrel. By Ronald M. Lockley. David & Charles, Newton Abbot, 1983. 192 pages; 60 line-drawings and 17 distribution maps. £7.95.

This book is the first to deal with all the storm-petrels of the World. It is fitting that it should be written by that seabirding pioneer Ronald M. Lockley, who was the first person to ring a Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus*. The early chapters provide a good insight into the young Lockley and his passion for seabirds. Vivid, descriptive passages are often mixed with a wealth of information and make good reading. Unfortunately, Lockley's anthropomorphic style sometimes undermines his otherwise authoritative prose.

Few new facts emerge on the biology and migration of the Storm Petrel, but the information is well presented and makes fascinating reading. Regrettably, all species are not treated equally, and some accounts of the rarer storm-petrels are reduced to a mere four or five lines. There are some errors and inconsistencies and Lockley's use of common names is sometimes archaic (e.g. Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea* is referred to throughout the text as 'North Atlantic Great Shearwater'). The distribution maps are mainly correct. Whilst the line-drawings add a lively touch to the work, some lack authenticity due to structural errors. Seabird buffs may find it a little pedestrian, but for general interest, or as an introduction to the storm-petrels, this is nevertheless a good, informative, well written account.

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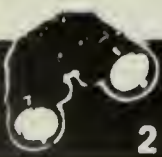
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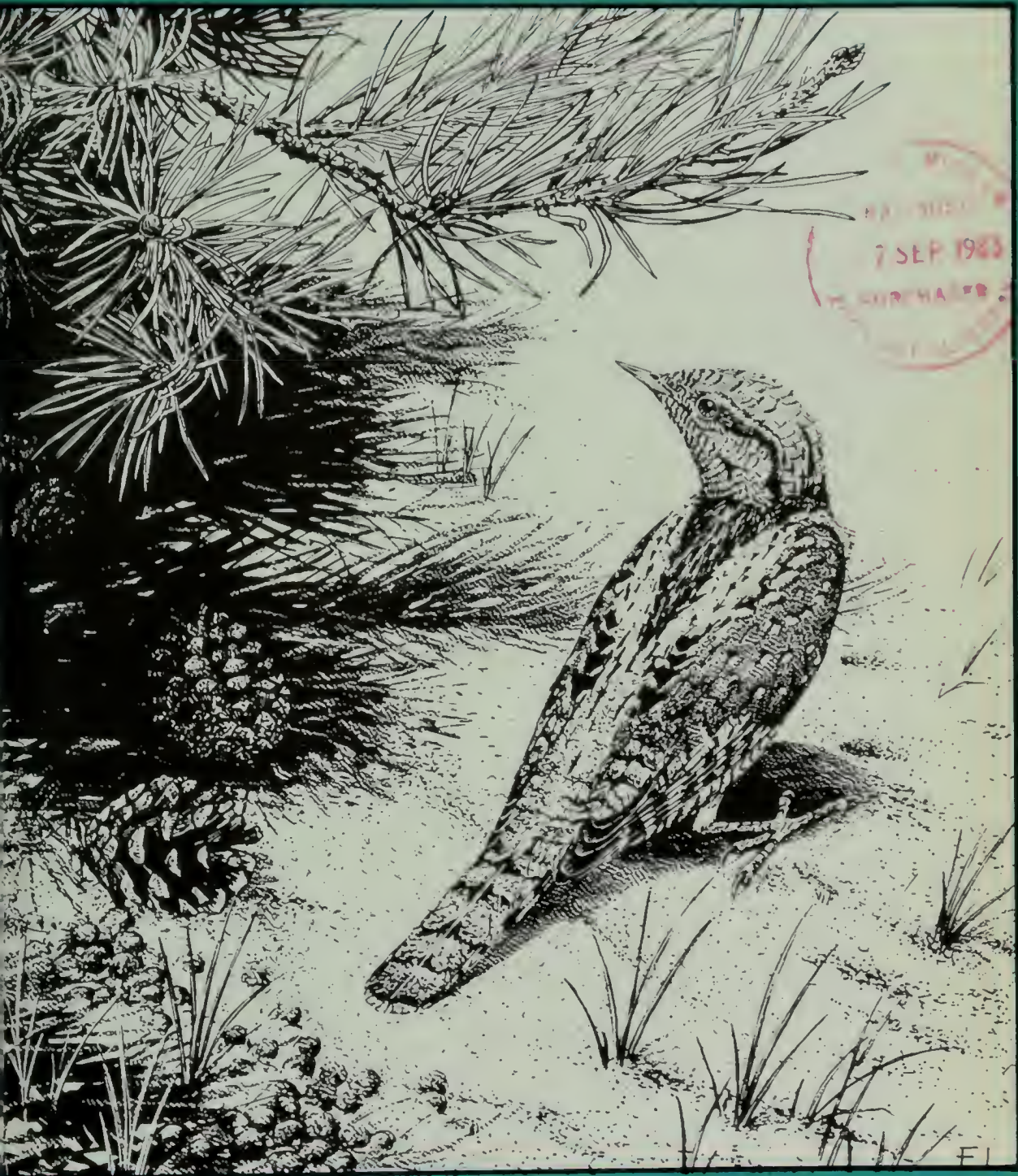
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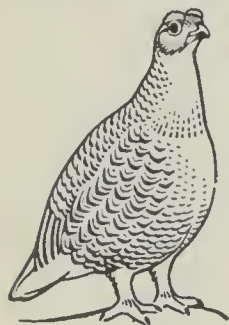
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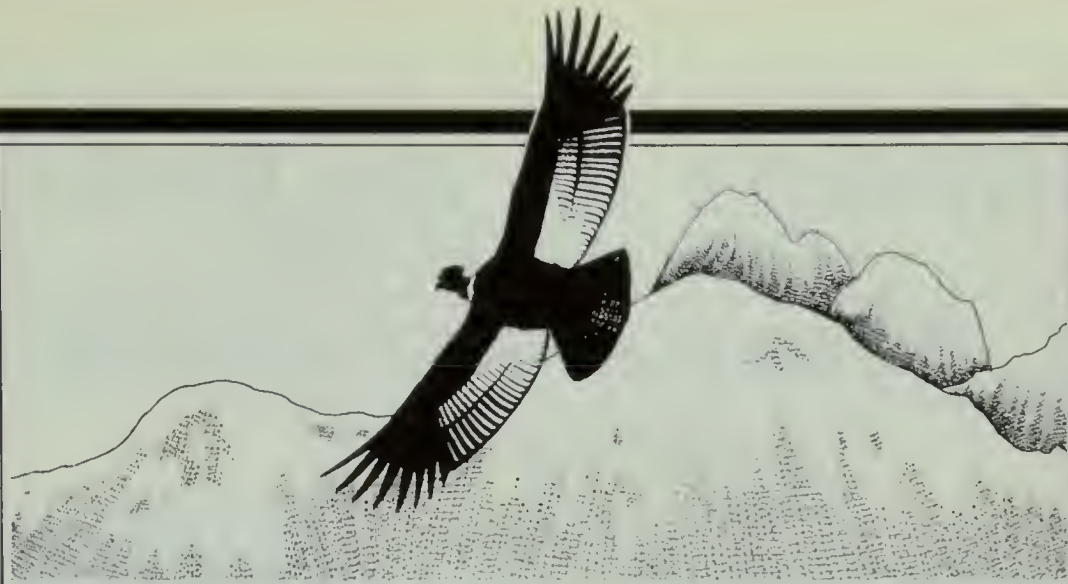
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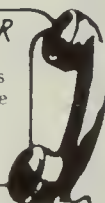
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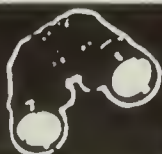
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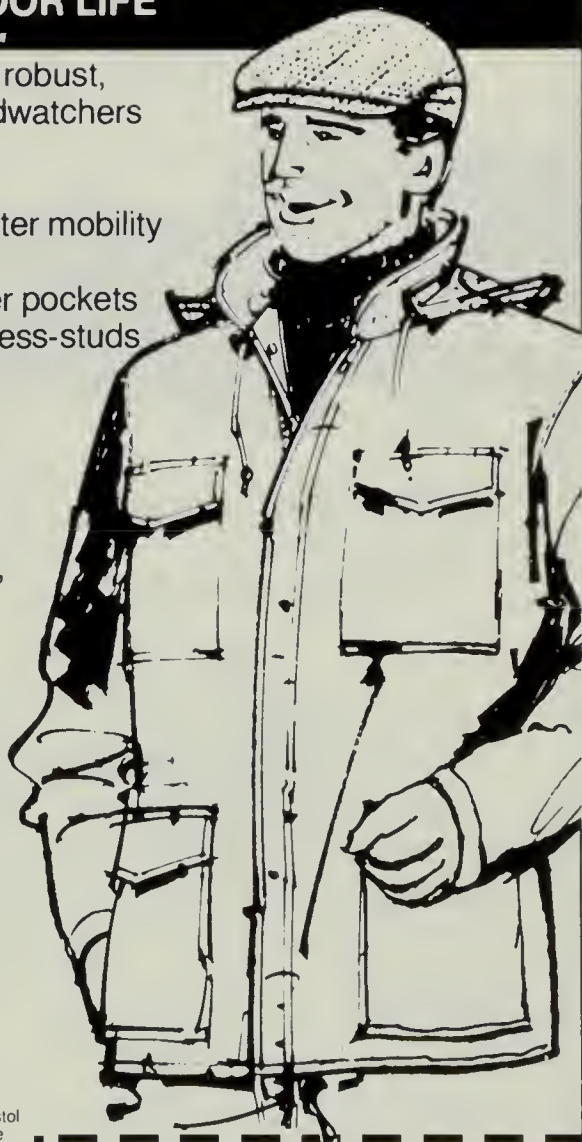
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The 'Marsh Hawk' problem

P. J. Grant



A 'ringtail' harrier at Cley, Norfolk, from October 1957 to April 1958 was identified as a first-year Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* of the Nearctic subspecies *hudsonius* (previously known as Marsh Hawk in North America, but now called Northern Harrier) because, after lengthy research, it was found to resemble immatures of that subspecies seen in the USA (*Brit. Birds* 64: 537-542). As noted by D. I. M. Wallace subsequently, however, the Eurasian subspecies *C. c. cyaneus* can apparently also occasionally produce first-years with rufous underparts (*Brit. Birds* 67: 518). In July 1980, in a further effort to clarify the long-standing confusion, and as part of a review of the Cley record and consideration by the Rarities Committee of two further claims of *hudsonius*, I requested (1) good photographs of immature *hudsonius*, (2) suggestions as to field characters other than underparts coloration which might distinguish the two subspecies, and (3) firm evidence that immatures with unstreaked rufous underparts really do occur in the Eurasian population (*Brit. Birds* 73: 318).

The response was good, but it has not really helped the central problem of distinguishing the two subspecies in immature plumages. The following summary may, however, provide a base-line for some future advance.

It is clear that juvenile (the plumage from fledging until the post-juvenile moult) *hudsonius* probably always has uniform or faintly streaked rufous underparts and underwing-coverts. The tone of colour may vary,



Fig. 1. Juvenile or first-year Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* of the Nearctic subspecies *hudsonius* (called Marsh Hawk in North America). Note the uniform or faintly-streaked (rufous) underparts and underwing-coverts, and the contrasting hood effect (P. J. Grant)

individually or through fading, from rich to pale. The post-juvenile moult of head and body feathers (which apparently takes place during the first autumn and winter) seems to be variable in extent: some individuals apparently retain the uniform rufous underparts throughout the first year (either because the post-juvenile moult is partial or because the new first-winter feathers are also rufous), whereas others acquire streaked, adult female-like underparts in their first-winter plumage. The underparts of a typical juvenile *cyaneus* are streaked, like those of the adult female.

Some *hudsonius*, apparently always unmoulted juveniles, have a uniform or heavily-streaked dark brown neck-band or breast-band, extending from the hindneck onto the sides of the neck and almost joining across the foreneck or upper breast. Viewed in profile, this gives the effect of a complete dark hood, contrasting with the uniform rufous remainder of the underparts. It is uncertain whether all juveniles have this hood effect, or whether it is also a mark of those juvenile *cyaneus* which have rufous underparts. The hood effect is apparently lost during the post-juvenile moult.

The hood effect has been suggested as a further distinction of *hudsonius* from *cyaneus*. So, too, have (a) its stronger and more contrasting head markings (but variation—probably connected with age—evident in photographs apparently clouds the value of this feature); (b) pervasion with rufous markings of the whole upperparts and upperwing on *hudsonius* (but does this also occur in rufous-phase *cyaneus*?); and (c) the presence of a dark patch on the underside of the inner secondaries (but this is certainly also a feature of some *cyaneus*).

Palaearctic records of immature Hen Harriers with uniform or faintly streaked rufous underparts are listed in table 1. Only the first four are certainly *cyaneus* (on location or time of year); the remainder could be vagrant *hudsonius*. As pointed out by C. A. E. Kirtland (*in litt.*), however, the underparts of many normal young *cyaneus* are basically buff or rufous, with dark or rufous brown streaks which may not be discernible at a distance, thus giving the false impression of uniform rufous underparts. This possible pitfall needs to be borne in mind.

In addition to the records listed in table 1, Jan van Kreuningen (1980) reported that he and others had seen several juvenile Hen Harriers with apparently unstreaked rufous underparts in the Zuidelijke IJsselmeer polders, Netherlands. He also referred to an adult male Hen Harrier with

Table 1. Palaearctic observations of Hen Harriers *C. cyaneus* with uniform or faintly-streaked rufous underparts

Locality	Date	Comments	Source
Japan	undated	**Skin at British Museum (Nat. Hist.), Tring, No 1897.10.30.48	Nieboer (1973)
Northeast China	?	Skin at Universitets Zool. Museum, Copenhagen No 29223	Nieboer (1973)
Finland	25th to 26th July 1968	Field observation: juvenile with family party	D. J. Britton (<i>in litt.</i>)
Balranald, Western Isles	2nd August 1973	Field observation	D. J. Britton (<i>in litt.</i>)
Cley, Norfolk	October 1957 to April 1958	*Field observation	<i>Brit. Birds</i> 64: 537-542
St Agnes, Scilly	10th October 1967	Field observation	D. J. Britton <i>et al.</i> (<i>in litt.</i>)
Wicken Fen, Cambridgeshire	29th October to 18th November 1972	*Field observation	M. T. Barnes & C. A. E. Kirtland (<i>in litt.</i>)
Saltfleetby, Lincolnshire	18th November 1973 to mid March 1974	*Field observation	K. Atkin & E. J. Mackrill (<i>in litt.</i>)
Schiermonnikoog, Netherlands	13th October 1974	Field observation: probable female	G. J. Oreel (1980)
Stear Point, Somerset	27th January 1979	*Field observation: also showed hood effect	P. Andrews (<i>in litt.</i>)
St Agnes & St Mary's, Scilly	16th October 1979	*Field observation: also showed hood effect	A. R. Dean <i>et al.</i> (<i>in litt.</i>)
Schiermonnikoog, Netherlands	5th October 1981	Field observation: female	S. Schoevaart (1982)

**P. R. Colston (*in litt.*) has examined this specimen, a first-winter female, and reports: 'The underparts are rather more buffy-rufous than *cyaneus* . . . with narrowish streaking on the whole of the underparts. It is not faint marking . . . and would be easily visible if the bird was perched.' Its place in this table is thus questionable.

*Detailed descriptions have been submitted (and are retained by the Rarities Committee, for examination on request) or published for these records. Otherwise, notes refer only to the underparts coloration.

features of Marsh Hawk: dark grey crown and hindneck, belly and flanks streaked with rusty-brown, and distinct barring on the tail. Q. L. Slings (1981) gave measurements of an immature female Hen Harrier (with streaked underparts) which matched those of the subspecies *hudsonius*, not those of the smaller *cyaneus*.

It might be argued that the two from the eastern Palearctic are a component of an east-west cline of increasing rufousness of underparts, and that they are thus irrelevant to the situation in the western Palearctic. Also, the last eight listed in table 1 could be vagrant *hudsonius*, leaving the Finnish and Western Isles observations as the only firm evidence of this colour-phase among western Palearctic *cyaneus*. On the other hand, these two records make a very obvious objection to claims of *hudsonius* in Europe, and it might also seem unlikely that what some would regard as a poor candidate for transatlantic vagrancy would have made the crossing on at least eight occasions in the 24 years 1957-1981. That they were variant-plumaged *cyaneus* seems an easier explanation.

I suggest that reasonable doubt now hangs over the real provenance of the Cley harrier, and that a firmer case for its identification as *hudsonius* needs to be made. The difficulty of obtaining proof, one way or the other, is obvious. If rufous-phase first-year *cyaneus* is proved to be other than an extreme rarity, the field identification problems will, of course, also embrace all harriers which have rufous underparts in juvenile or first-year plumages (namely Pallid *C. macrourus*, Montagu's *C. pygargus*, and Pied Harriers *C. melanoleucus*), as well as *hudsonius*. The best proof will come from observations of recently fledged rufous-phase juvenile *cyaneus* in Europe. It is perhaps surprising that there has so far been only one such case; should this situation persist, it would begin to suggest that the rufous-phase is an extreme rarity, and European claims of *hudsonius* would then have to be viewed in a different, more favourable light.

Acknowledgments

I should like to thank all those who have contributed to this discussion: P. Andrews, K. Atkin, Jeffery Boswall, A. D. Brewer, D. J. Britton, A. R. Dean, M. Field, P. A. Gregory, Frances Hamerstrom, C. A. E. Kirtland, S. Lorand, E. J. Mackrill, R. F. Porter, Will Russell, R. Simmons, Q. L. Slings, P. Smith and T. A. Walsh. I am especially grateful to P. R. Colston who reported on the Japanese specimen at the British Museum (Natural History). Tring; Gerald J. Oreel for supplying useful references and records; and D. I. M. Wallace for helpful comments and amendments to an earlier draft of this paper.

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The Chough in Britain and Ireland



I. D. Bullock, D. R. Drewett and S. P. Mickleburgh

The Chough *Pyrhcorax pyrrhcorax* has a global range that extends from the Atlantic seaboard of Europe to the Himalayas. Vaurie (1959) mentioned seven subspecies and gave the range of *P. p. pyrrhcorax* as Britain and Ireland only. He considered the Brittany population to be the race found in the Alps, Italy and Iberia, *P. p. erythroramphus*, whereas Witherby *et al.* (1940) regarded it as the nominate race.

Despite its status as a Schedule I species, and general agreement that it was formerly much more widespread, the Chough has never been adequately surveyed. Apart from isolated regional surveys (e.g. Harrop 1970, Donovan 1972), there has been only one comprehensive census, undertaken by enthusiastic volunteers in 1963 (Rolfe 1966). Although often quoted, the accuracy of the 1963 survey has remained in question, and whether the population was increasing, stable or in decline has remained a mystery.

In 1982, the RSPB organised an international survey in conjunction with the IWC and the BTO, to determine the current breeding numbers and distribution in Britain and Ireland and to collect data on habitat types within the main breeding areas. A survey of the Brittany population was organised simultaneously by members of La Société pour l'Etude et la Protection de la Nature en Bretagne (SEPNB). The complete survey results are presented here, together with an analysis of the Chough's breeding biology based on collected data and BTO records, along with a discussion of the ecological factors affecting Choughs. Regional totals and local patterns of breeding and feeding biology are discussed in more detail in a series of regional papers for Ireland, the Isle of Man, Wales and Scotland (Bullock *et al.* 1983a, b, c; Warnes 1983).

Methods

Coverage in Scotland, the Isle of Man and Wales was planned by local organisers who ensured a minimum of two visits to each area within the breeding season. Coverage in Ireland was less thorough owing to scarcity of observers, but all areas (with the exception of a few offshore islands) were



160. Choughs *Pyrrhonorax pyrrhonorax*, Powys, July 1951 (Harold Platt)

visited at least once. All previous known sites were visited, and coverage was extended to include other potentially suitable coastlines or likely inland areas.

Observers were provided with instruction sheets and survey cards on which they recorded Choughs seen, non-breeding flocks, any evidence of breeding, grid references of nest sites and also estimated proportions of habitat types on a 1-km square basis. Within these habitats, livestock types and any Chough feeding incidents were also noted.

The Chough is predominantly social, and only between April and late June are breeding pairs reliably distinct from flocks. At this time, non-breeders tend to wander farther inland than do breeding pairs, which remain close to their nest sites on the coast (though, occasionally, breeding birds may join non-breeding flocks to feed). Young Choughs probably pair in their first year, though they may not breed until their third or even fourth year (P. Roberts *in litt.*). Until then, they may prospect likely sites or even build nests. With experience, the lack of purpose in these non-breeding pairs can be distinguished from the urgency of breeding birds.

The following indications were taken as evidence of definite breeding: wool-carrying in early April (to line the nest); single birds visiting nest sites in late April and early May (when males feed the incubating females); pairs visiting sites between early May and end of June (to feed nestlings); and the noise of the nestlings themselves in late June. Probable breeding was recorded for birds seen feeding and then flying directly towards likely nesting terrain, but where no breeding site was confirmed. Lone pairs seen only briefly in likely breeding areas were recorded as possible breeders. To help resolve these categories, it was recommended that observers make two visits to each area, in mid May and again in mid June.

Accuracy of counts

The survey was helped greatly by the extrovert nature of the Chough, whose flamboyant character and distinctive cry often helped the location of birds from some distance. Previous experience, however, of the bird and of its behaviour, helped greatly. Wherever possible, therefore, all areas covered by inexperienced counters were surveyed independently by one of the three full-time survey workers. Observer-accuracy could then be estimated by dividing the first count by the final estimate for that area (based on all observer results). There is no doubt that, with inexperienced observers, there can be considerable errors. Comparison of the performance of experienced individuals on the same section shows, however, that observers should find 85-100% of all Choughs on their first walk in May or June (but only 76% in April).

The ability of observers to locate non-breeding flocks was more variable (66-100%), and the ability to determine the status of pairs on a single visit varied between 50% and 78%. With a second visit, resolution was much improved, and accuracy rose to over 90% in most cases. Inland sites were checked on the basis of past or likely use (e.g. all old quarries were checked). Here, 92% accuracy was achieved in a single visit. In Ireland, where Choughs use mainly natural inland crags, the accuracy was probably lower.

Historical perspective

The decline in the 18th and early 19th centuries was summarised by Rolfe (1966). Fig. 1 gives an idea of the disappearance of Choughs from English counties and the western isles of Scotland. Ussher & Warren (1900) recounted its disappearance from the eastern Irish counties in the mid 1800s, and described it as a 'diminishing species'. The disappearance from Irish inland sites continued into the early 1900s, though there were some local increases after 1925 (Kennedy *et al.* 1954). Data for the intervening years until 1963 is scant. The most dramatic event in this period was the demise of the 'Cornish' Chough: the last proved breeding of native English birds was in 1947, though a pair lingered until 1967 (Penhallurick 1978).

The 1963 survey found 700-800 breeding pairs in Britain and Ireland (Rolfe 1966) a figure largely underpinned by the Irish total of 567-682 pairs. There is no doubt that the 1963 Irish survey achieved only partial coverage, despite heroic efforts by the few volunteers who undertook it (Cabot 1965). At that time, little was known about the part played by non-breeders in the population, and in some cases figures based on post-breeding flocks almost certainly overestimated breeding pairs. In these cases, the original results (kindly provided by Dr David Cabot) have been re-analysed: this brings the 1963 total down to 400-477 breeding pairs (Bullock *et al.* 1983a). The shortfall between this and the 1982 Irish total (650-677 pairs) represents those areas not covered in 1963 (most inland areas, plus some coastal sections, especially in Co. Kerry). Ironically, overestimation has eclipsed the effect of incomplete coverage, and the published figure (Cabot 1965) is very similar to that for 1982.

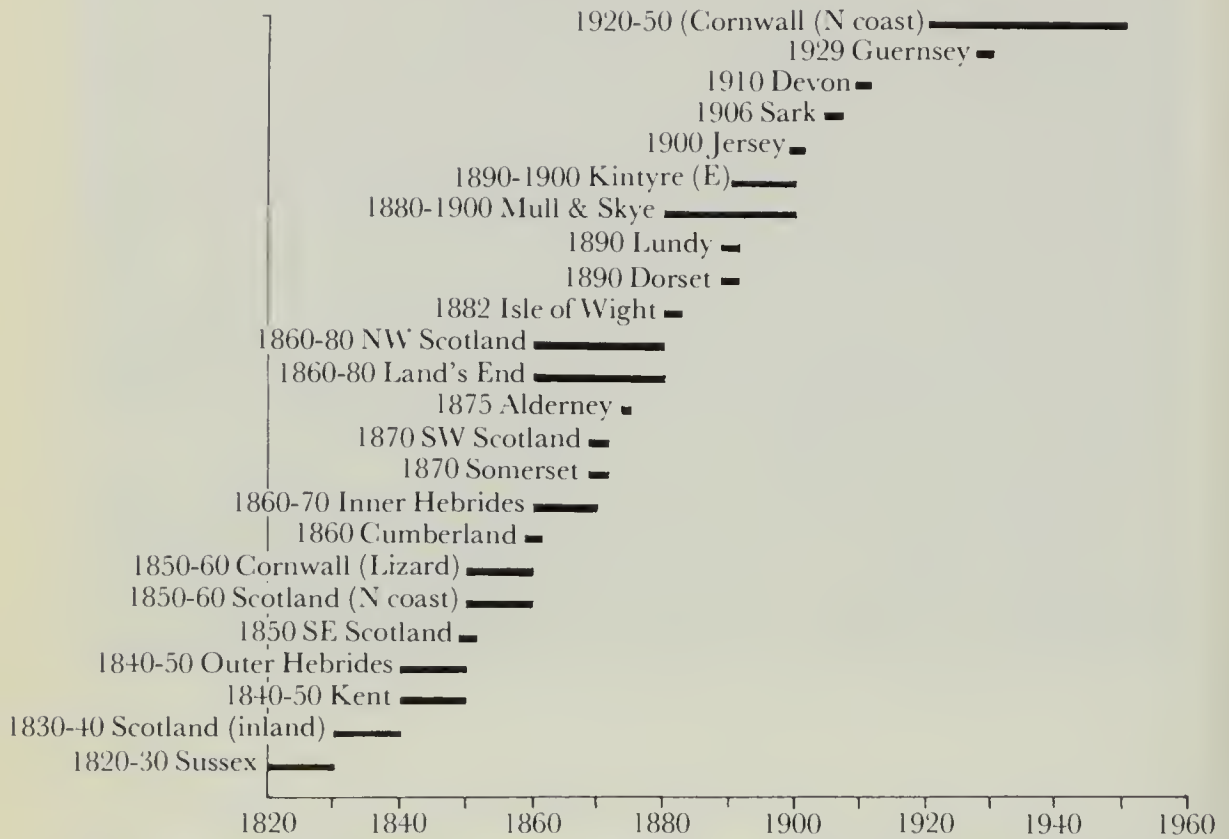


Fig. 1. Periods of probable disappearance of the Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* in various regions of Britain

The 1963 Welsh total is considered to be reasonably accurate, but the Manx and Scottish figures for 1963 were almost certainly underestimates (Bullock *et al.* 1983b, c; Warnes 1983).

Population in 1982

The results of the 1982 survey are given in table 1. A total of 905 breeding pairs was counted in Britain and Ireland. This is a minimum figure, which represents probable plus definite breeding pairs. A further 54 pairs possibly bred. If we allow for pairs that may have been missed (as in those many Irish areas visited only once), we arrive at a figure of around 1,000 pairs, representing an upper limit for the British and Irish population.

In addition to breeding pairs, 825-858 non-breeding Choughs were encountered. The proportion of non-breeders (31-32%) is strikingly similar to the figure of 30% suggested by Rolfe (1966).

It is gratifying to note that the distribution of the Chough in 1982 (fig. 2) is almost exactly as shown in *The Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland* (Sharrock 1976), which was based on fieldwork during 1968-72. *The Atlas* recorded Choughs in 244 10-km squares (181 'confirmed', 25 'probable' and 38 'possible' breeding); the 1982 tally is remarkably similar: the 243 10-km squares comprised 200 'confirmed', 20 'probable' and 23 'possible' breeding. The four months' fieldwork in 1982 seems to have matched the distribution shown by the five years' fieldwork for *The Atlas*. Over the last 10

Table 1. Regional totals for 1982 survey of Choughs *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*

Region	1963 (pairs)	Breeding 1982 (pairs)	Non-breeding 1982 (individuals)
Islay		53-61	32-50
Mull of Kintyre		1-2	7
Jura		6-8	7
Colonsay		1	0
SCOTLAND TOTAL	11	61-72	46-64
ISLE OF MAN		49-60	61-65
Anglesey	2	8	16
Caernarvonshire	42	51	24-25
Denbighshire	1	1	0
Merionethshire	7	12	0
Montgomeryshire	5-7	2	6
Cardiganshire	9	16	19
Pembrokeshire	33-36	49-52	38-40
WALES TOTAL	99-104	139-142	103-106
Northern Ireland	31-33	9-10	3
Donegal	120-131	109-112	103
Sligo	15	5-6	6
Mayo	81-100	73-75	72
Galway	79-93	38-39	33
Clare	15	31-34	35-37
Kerry	132-171	205-209	131
Cork	73-98	148-153	171
Waterford	21-26	37-46	59-65
Wexford	0	1	2
IRELAND TOTAL	567-682	656-685	615-623
GRAND TOTAL	700-800	905-959	825-858

years, the range of the Chough has hardly changed.

The declines that may have occurred in the 19th century (fig. 1) seem to have been arrested and even reversed in a few areas. There remain a few areas with evidence of a decline in the last 20 years (notably Northern Ireland), but in many others (e.g. the south coast of Ireland, Anglesey, Snowdonia and possibly Islay) there is some evidence of slight increases.

For those areas in Ireland where good detail is available from 1963, it is clear that numbers recorded in 1982 were almost unchanged. Furthermore, records kept by R. J. Ussher in Ireland for the 1890s and 1900s give Chough sites and flock sizes virtually unchanged to this day. Even at isolated inland sites first found by Ussher in 1891 and 1905 (some up to 17 km from the sea) pairs were still breeding in 1982, some 90 years on (Bullock *et al.* 1983a).

When such historical accounts are compared in detail with 1982 figures and the regional totals are set against those for the 1963 survey, the present Chough population appears quite healthy. Ireland remains its great stronghold, with 72% of the total population; Wales holds 16%, and Islay and the

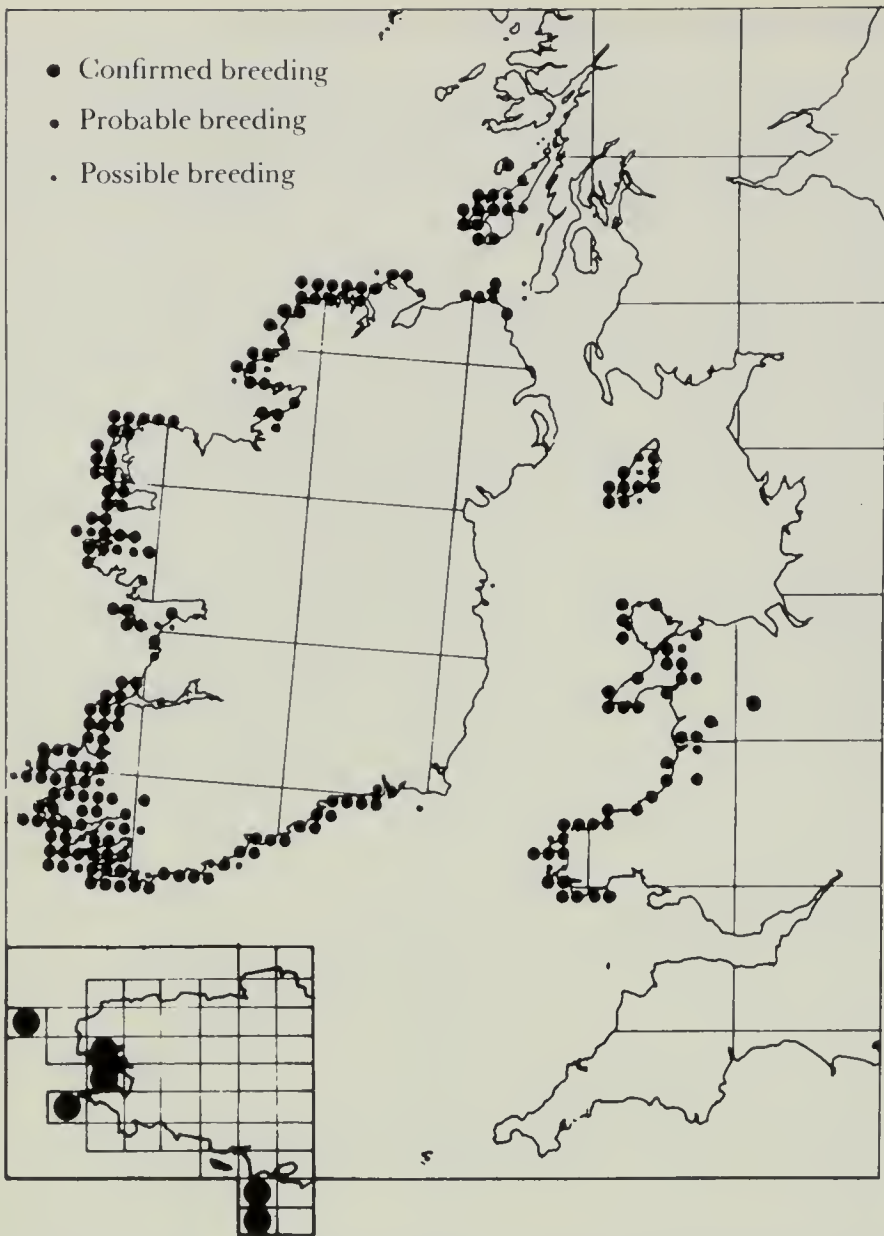


Fig. 2. Breeding distribution of the Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* in Britain and Ireland, and (inset) in Brittany, France

Isle of Man hold the remainder in equal parts.

The Brittany Chough census located 25 breeding pairs in 1982, with a further ten pairs of uncertain status (which may include non-breeding pairs). This figure of 25-35 pairs is an all-time low, having declined from the '30-40 pairs' recorded in 1973 (A. Thomas *in litt.*).

Productivity and mortality

There is very little known about the population dynamics of the Chough. Data gathered from the 1982 survey, unpublished field notes and past oologist diaries, BTO nest record cards and BTO ringing recoveries have all been used here to review its productivity and mortality. Only data for the number of successful fledged young were collected during the survey. No attempt was made to examine the contents of individual nests. Chough is a Schedule I species, and as such is protected at all times by law.

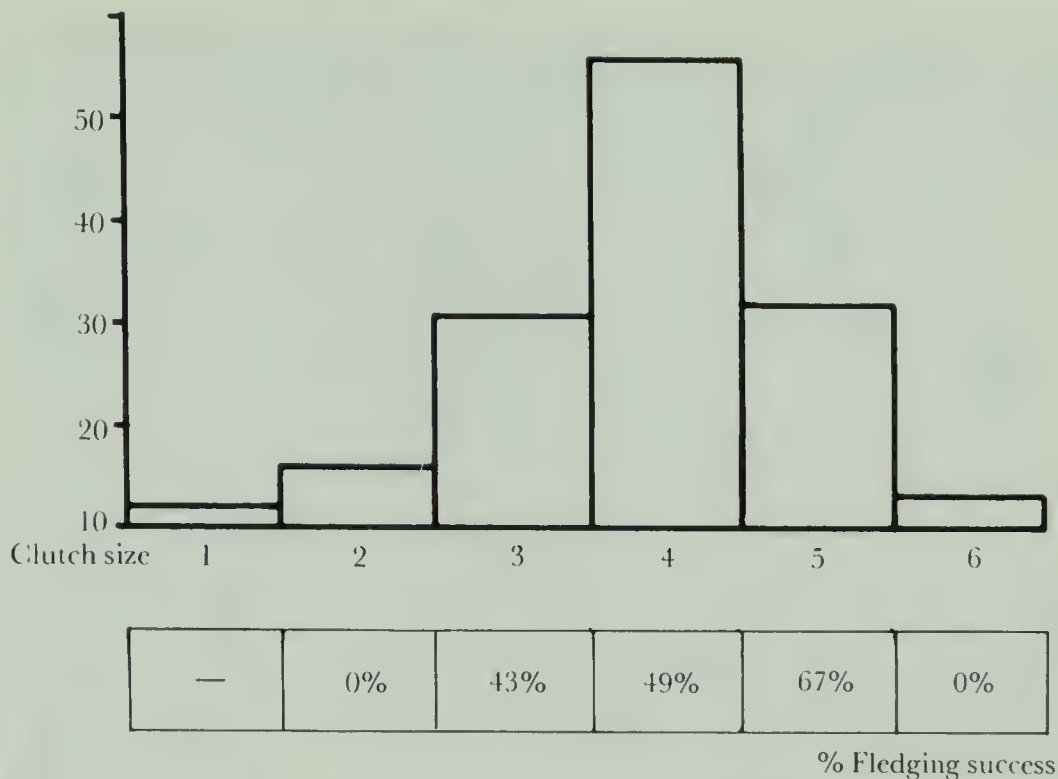


Fig. 3. Distribution of different clutch sizes of the Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*, with the percentage fledging success (n = 236)

Table 2. Productivity and nest mortality of Choughs *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* within regions of Britain and Ireland

Region	Clutch size	Number of nestlings	Number of fledged young	Nest mortality (%)	Eggs lost (%)	Nestlings lost (%)
Wales (coastal)	4.27 ± 0.76 (n = 33)	3.11 ± 1.43 (n = 46)	2.68 ± 1.35 (n = 160)	37	27	14
Wales (inland)	4.09 ± 0.90 (n = 43)	2.47 ± 1.45 (n = 43)	2.05 ± 1.31 (n = 79)	50	40	17
Ireland	3.76 ± 0.95 (n = 87)	—	2.85 ± 1.04 (n = 67)	24	—	—
Isle of Man	3.39 ± 1.13 (n = 49)	2.61 ± 1.43 (n = 59)	1.88 ± 1.61 (n = 67)	44	23	28
Islay	4.38 ± 0.77 (n = 24)	2.61 ± 1.39 (n = 38)	1.82 ± 1.34 (n = 34)	58	40	30
Britain and Ireland	3.88 ± 0.99 (n = 236)	2.70 ± 1.43 (n = 194)	2.38 ± 1.40 (n = 410)	39	30	12

Clutch size

The Chough lays one to six eggs (fig. 3); in its British and Irish range, the average clutch is 3.88 eggs ± 0.99 (n = 236). Scottish birds lay most eggs on average (4.38 ± 0.77) (table 2). Though not significantly more than in Wales, this is significantly higher than clutch sizes in the Isle of Man (t = 4.30, p < 0.001) and in Ireland (t = 3.26, p < 0.01). It has been shown for a number of other species that island populations lay smaller clutches (Lack 1968). Isle of Man Choughs lay least eggs (3.39), which is signifi-



161. Part of large flock of Choughs *Pyrrhonorax pyrrhonorax*, France, August 1978 (Keith Atkin)

cantly lower than Irish clutches (3.76 eggs, $t = 1.95$, $p < 0.05$) and Welsh clutches (4.18 eggs, $t = 4.16$, $p < 0.001$). Though inland pairs laid slightly fewer eggs (table 2), the difference between inland and coastal clutch sizes is not significant.

All breeding data were grouped into 'bad' years, which were breeding seasons following severe winters (1948, 1963, 1979 and 1982), and 'good' years (the rest), to test for effects of winter weather on subsequent breeding performance. No significant differences were found for clutch size, for number of nestlings hatched, nor for number of young fledged.

Nestling success

Coastal pairs in Wales (and probably also Ireland) manage to hatch most young, with an average of 3.11 nestlings per pair. Despite their low clutch sizes, the Isle of Man Choughs have the lowest egg to nestling mortality (23%). Greatest losses at the egg stage occur on Islay (40% mortality) and in inland Wales (40%) (table 2). It is impossible to say what causes these losses. Some are certainly a result of predation; others are probably due to natural infertility. Young birds in particular are more likely to lay infertile eggs or even desert clutches as a result of breeding inexperience. (The higher proportion of inexperienced birds in an expanding population may partly explain the greater losses in Islay and in Snowdonia for example.)

Fledging success

It is a striking fact that Ireland (with the second smallest clutches) has the

greatest fledging success (2.85 young per pair), while Islay, with the largest clutch size, has the poorest (1.82 young fledged). The high success in Ireland may be slightly biased due to lack of data on breeding failures. Despite this, clutch and fledgling differences in the British Isles reflect the biological trend for larger clutches farther north. Certainly, fledging success is greater in the southern parts of the Chough's range: success ranges from 1.82 young in Scotland to 2.85 in Ireland to 3.7 in Abruzzo, Italy (Lovari, 1976). Success rates between Scotland, Ireland and Wales are all significantly different ($p < 0.05$) (table 2).

It is noteworthy that in Pembrokeshire fledging success is slightly higher than in the rest of Wales ($p < 0.05$); this may also reflect the better coastal climate in the south of Wales. Unfortunately, there are no data for clutch sizes from this country.

Inland pairs are less successful than their coastal counterparts in Wales, where inland and coastal clutch sizes are not significantly different (table 2): inland pairs raise fewer young (2.05) than on the coast (2.68, $p < 0.001$).

When data for all areas are combined (table 2), the mortality in the egg stage is 30% and that at the nestling stage 12%. This means that out of 100 eggs laid there should be on average 61 fledged young. Farner & King (1971) quoted 57% breeding success in open nests and 76% success by hole-nesters. This freedom from predation is apparently not conferred on the Chough, which enjoys only 61% breeding success overall.

Post-fledging mortality

Since the BTO ringing scheme began, there have been only 48 returns for the Chough, of which 39 were ringed as nestlings, and 38 recovered dead. Four of these died in the nest (and are thus excluded from analysis), and one was shot. The remaining 33 have been used to analyse post-fledging mortality. Not surprisingly, 40% of all young birds died in their first two months out of the nest; a further 40% of all young birds died in their first winter (October to March); thus, the total first-year mortality is 85%. Similarly, in the second year, most died in winter months, with an equally high annual mortality of 80%. The sample size (33) is too small for these figures to be trustworthy; it also gives us no idea of mortality rate in older birds. The only other available data come from the Chough colour-ringing scheme carried out on Bardsey Island, Gwynedd, by Peter Roberts. Of 52 fledglings ringed between 1978 and 1981, eight were found dead in their first year, and at least 13 were seen still alive after their first year. For these, first-year mortality is at minimum 25%, at maximum 75%. From 32 ringed fledglings (1978-80), at least seven survived their second year, which gives maximum second-year mortality of 78%. These figures suggest that mortality of immatures at Bardsey may not be quite so severe as the BTO ringing returns imply.

The main periods of mortality can be gauged by using all the ringing recoveries (fig. 4). Here, the winter losses show up with February clearly the worst month. Post-fledging losses in July and August also stand out; mortality in April and June may reflect stress in the adults during the breeding season, though this is not nearly so marked as in the cases of other

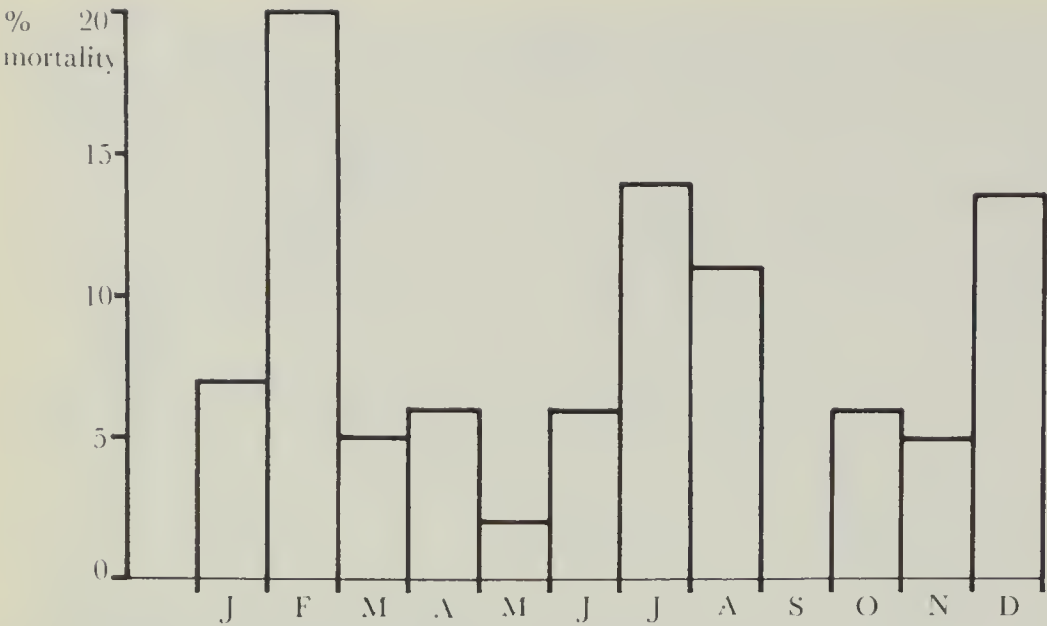


Fig. 4. Monthly distribution of mortality of Choughs *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* based on ringing recoveries (n = 43)

crow species, where, in April (Magpie *Pica pica*, Raven *Corvus corax*, Rook *C. frugilegus* and Carrion Crow *C. corone*) and May (Jackdaw *C. monedula*), adult mortality reaches a very dramatic peak (Busse 1969; Holyoak 1971). Recovery of Chough corpses is made difficult both by their scarcity and the terrain in which the species lives.

Productivity

From 100 Chough eggs laid (equivalent to 26 clutches) an average of 61 young fledge. Using the post-fledging mortality figures above, these 61 young dwindle to only two individuals of first potential breeding age (table 3). Thus, 26 clutches are required to guarantee two breeding adults, equivalent to a bird gained every 13 years. Assuming a stable population, this suggests a breeding lifespan of 13 years, and an actual lifespan of 15 years for breeding adults. The oldest known Chough was ‘Eric’, a bird at least 17 years old, ringed as an adult in 1965 on Bardsey and recovered in the winter of 1981/82. (P. Roberts *in litt.*).

Table 3. Life table for Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*
Month 11 is February

YEAR 1		YEAR 2		YEAR 3	
Month	No.	Month	No.	Month	No.
1	100 eggs	1	11 immatures	1	2 adults
2	70 nestlings	2	9 immatures	2	2 adults
3	61 fledglings	3	9 immatures	3	2 adults
4	52 juveniles	4	9 immatures	4	2 adults
5	43 juveniles	5	9 immatures	5	2 adults
6	43 juveniles	6	9 immatures	6	2 adults
7	39 juveniles	7	9 immatures	7	2 adults
8	37 juveniles	8	9 immatures	8	2 adults
9	31 juveniles	9	7 immatures	9	2 adults
10	26 immatures	10	7 immatures	10	2 adults
11	17 immatures	11	3 immatures	11	2 adults
12	15 immatures	12	2 immatures	12	2 adults

Nest sites

Table 4 summarises the sites throughout Britain and Ireland. Of all pairs located, 86% were on the coast. Wales is a striking exception to this, with 32% of the pairs found nesting inland, mostly at disused quarries and mineshafts in North Wales. In Ireland, only Co. Kerry showed a similar pattern (17% of its 200 pairs inland), with some nesting in natural crags up to 19km from the sea. On Islay, over 30% of the breeding pairs nest inland, using mainly old buildings, though the use of rafters in new farm barns is a recent innovation.

Choughs will nest at altitudes of up to 600m, and up to 27km inland. Many of these inland pairs are successful, despite extreme isolation. One Welsh site 27km from the sea has been in use since at least 1957, and remains 40km from its next nearest neighbour. A current Irish site is 28km from the open sea, and 13km from its nearest neighbour, and was occupied as long ago as 1890. The survival of such isolated pairs away from coastal areas reinforces the impression that the Chough population is healthy.

Coastal Choughs nest in crevices in sheer rocky cliffs or on ledges in coastal caves (table 4). Taking the population as a whole, only 10% of all the known pairs nested in man-made features, which included ruined buildings, lighthouses, bridges, mines, quarries, castles and, in one case, an abandoned hotel.

Table 4. Survey of Choughs *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* in Britain and Ireland in 1982: regional nest-site data

	Ireland	Wales	Scotland (Islay)	Isle of Man	Total
Nesting inland (%)	8	32	30-34	7-8	14
Using man-made sites (%)	5	28	20-23	3-4	9-10
NEST SITES.					
Quarry	0	27	0	0	27
Mine	1	13	0	1	15
Building	1	0	12	2	15
Bridge	3	0	0	0	3
Natural crag	38	5	6	0	49
TOTAL	43	45	18	3	109

As Choughs use sites naturally sheltered from the elements, one might infer that aspect would be irrelevant. This appears not to be the case. Nest-site directions recorded at the coastal sites in Wales showed that most faced southwest or west (fig. 5). This may be related to the prevailing coastal bias. A northwesterly aspect occurs commonly at inland Welsh sites and for both the inland and coastal sites in Ireland. Whether this direction provides any shelter from the prevailing southwesterly winds is impossible to say.

At two Welsh nests and one in Northern Ireland, a third bird was regularly noted in the company of the breeding pair. These 'helpers' were also noted at at least four nests on Islay; one was seen to help the resident

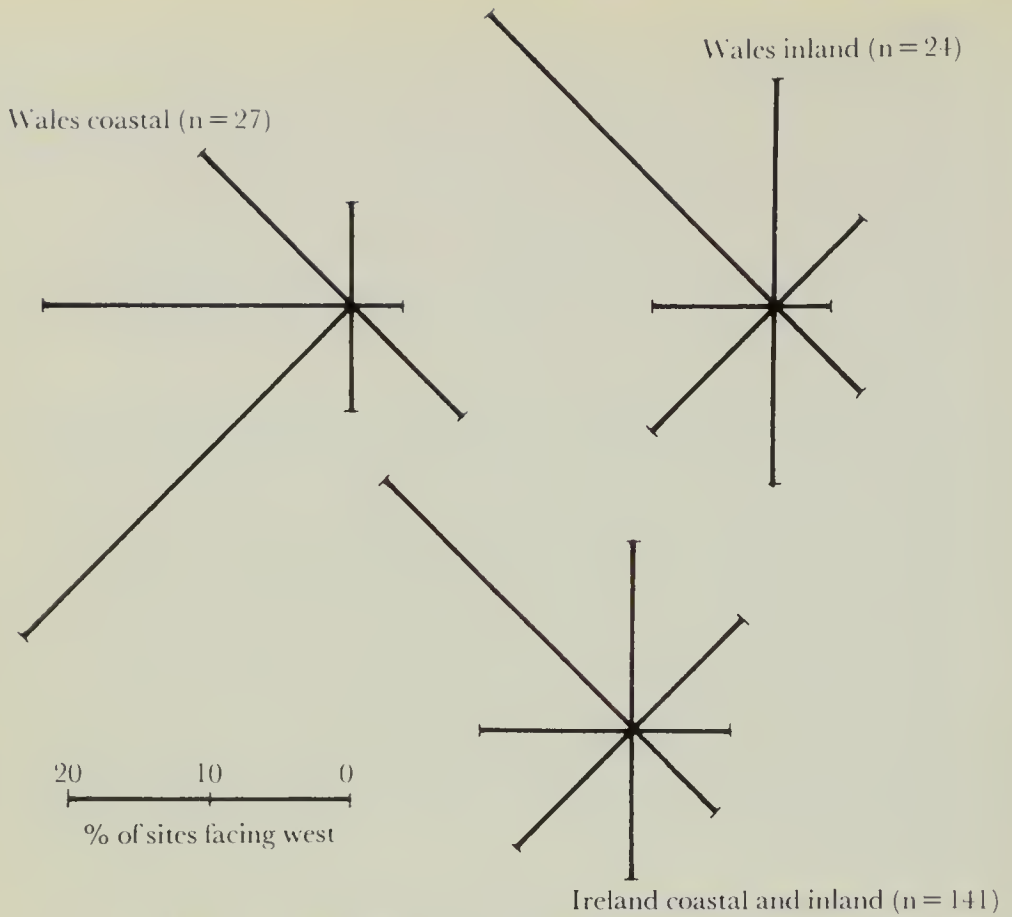


Fig. 5. Aspect of nest-sites of Choughs *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*

male feed the incubating female (Warnes 1982), though the exact nature of this intriguing relationship remains a mystery.

Breeding density

Choughs do not nest colonially: the average distance between coastal pairs (calculated from 32 Welsh sites in the best Chough areas) was 1.4 km. In the better areas, breeding densities varied between one pair per kilometre to four pairs per kilometre (as in Co. Kerry and certain Irish offshore islands). The Calf of Man holds the record, with six pairs in 1 km². In Wales the closest nests were found within 300 m of each other. A coastal locality in Co. Kerry has two Chough pairs nesting one vertically above the other in a sloping 180 m cliff, and a ruined castle in Co. Galway contained at least two breeding pairs among a colony of Jackdaws. These, however, are exceptional cases. This coastal spacing contrasts with very low breeding densities of inland pairs, where, for 27 sites in North Wales, the average distance to nearest neighbouring pair was 2.6 km (Bullock *et al.* 1983c).

Breeding density presumably depends on available nest sites and quality of adjacent feeding areas. Choughs tend to feed very close to their nest sites: the average distance between 58 coastal nest sites and their observed feeding areas was 0.7 km. Of these pairs, 88% fed within 1 km of the nest, though some flew up to 2 km for food. In Snowdonia, where pairs are well over 2 km apart, Choughs fly on average much farther for their food, and pairs are away from the nest longer. Trips of 2 km or even 3 km for food are not unusual (IDB personal observations).

Feeding ecology

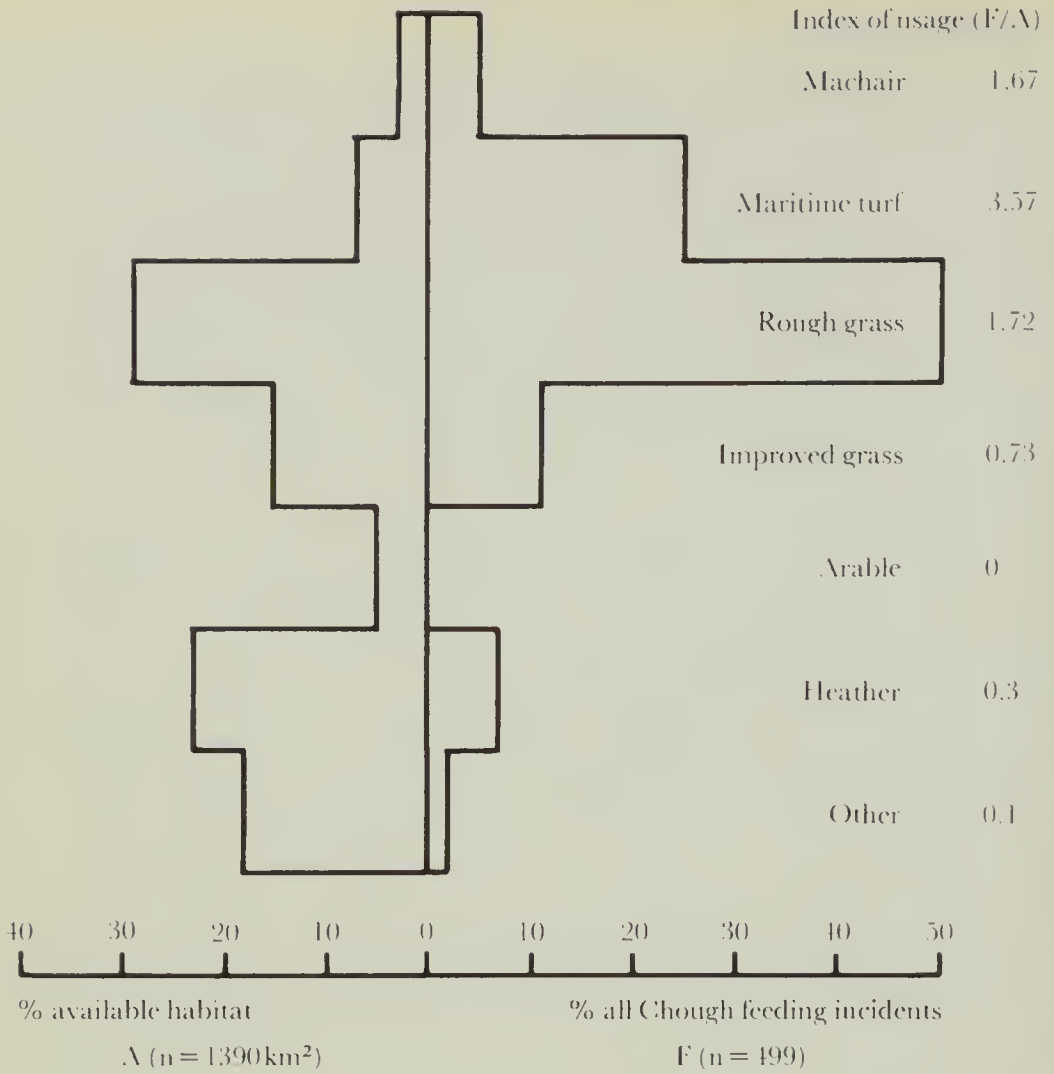
A number of studies (Cowdy 1973; Bullock 1980; Roberts 1982; Warnes 1982) have now confirmed the general diet of the Chough. Characteristically, its strong curved bill is used to dig for its food, which consists almost exclusively of insects, particularly (and at all times of year) soil-living invertebrate larvae. Of 33 feeding incidents analysed from Ireland in the 1982 breeding season (April-July), 60% involved leatherjackets (*Tipula*) as likely prey items, 24% ants (especially *Lasius flavus*), 12% beetle larvae, and 9% spiders. One notable incident involved Choughs feeding alongside gulls *Larus*, Rooks and Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus* on adult chafer beetles *Phyllopertha horticola*, hatched in large numbers from machair in early June.

Bullock (1980) suggested that mere abundance of soil invertebrates is not enough. Good Chough feeding sites must have either a modicum of bare ground or vegetation short enough to allow access to the soil for digging. Thus, maritime heathland which is periodically burned, maritime turf or short-grazed traditional rough pastures are all ideal. Each has minimal vegetation cover and is rich in invertebrates. To test these ideas further, the proportions of habitat types in all areas visited, and the habitats selected by feeding Choughs, were recorded during the 1982 survey.

The results confirm these findings. For all the surveyed areas in Britain and Ireland, the general proportion of rough grass present was only 29%, yet it dominated the feeding records, with 50% of all Chough feeding incidents (fig. 6 includes habitat definitions). Feeding frequency might simply reflect whichever habitat is most abundant; to correct for this, we can divide percentage feeding occurrence in each habitat by its percentage availability, to obtain an index of usage (fig. 6). An index greater than 1 then represents an increased usage by feeding birds. Maritime turf and machair are clearly also important feeding habitats.

Machair is common in Ireland, and to a lesser extent on Islay. In both areas, it is an important feeding habitat for Choughs; in summer, they will fly long distances from their nest-cliffs to feed in it. In winter, these low-lying dune grasslands are crucial feeding areas where large winter flocks gather (Bullock 1980; Warnes 1982), at times in excess of 100 individuals (F. King *in litt.*). Such sites are often adjacent to beaches where seaweed accumulates after winter storms. This tidewrack also represents an important winter food resource, where shorehoppers *Orchestia gammarella* and larvae of kelp fly *Coelopa frigida* are the main prey (Bullock 1980).

Improved grass was used less than might be expected on a purely random basis during the breeding season; and arable land was not used at all. There are only a few recorded instances of Choughs feeding in arable fields, mostly in autumn or winter: e.g. harvested carrot and potato fields in Ireland in autumn (IDB personal observations); recently ploughed and resown coastal fields in September (A. Moralee *in litt.*); turnip fields in winter on the Isle of Man (E. D. Kerruish *in litt.*) and in Co. Cork (P. Smiddy *in litt.*). On Anglesey, Choughs fed on surface barley grains in the stubbles in autumn and winter, and noticeably so when more favoured sites were frozen after heavy frosts (Bullock 1980).



Machair = short (usually grazed) level turf over sand, typically behind or near dune systems; Maritime turf = short, herb-rich turf on clifftops and headlands, drenched by spray in winter (thrift *Armeria*, sea plantain *Plantago maritima*, buck's-horn plantain *P. coronopus*); Rough grass = 'unimproved' grassland, usually unploughed for at least ten years, typically a mossy, herb-rich turf usually on poorer soils; Improved grass = richer pasture, often on deeper soils, with evidence of recent 'improvement'—fertilised, ploughed or reseeded

Fig. 6. Selection by Choughs *Pyrrhonorax pyrrhonorax* of habitats for feeding in relation to habitat-availability in survey areas

Inland Choughs usually occur in mountainous country where sheep pastures prevail. At such sites in Ireland and Wales (fig. 7), 84% of all feeding incidents occurred in rough grass despite its being only 40% of the available habitat. Over three-quarters of all the feeding incidents in rough grass occurred in sheep-grazed terrain; in Ireland, this feature was particularly striking where so much inland country is dominated by water-logged, peaty ground. Chough sites were often located near the better-drained soils on small sheep farms in an otherwise boggy landscape. Another notable feature of inland feeding is the higher index of usage of improved grass compared with the coast (fig. 7). J. Grasse (*in litt.*) has shown in mid Wales that Choughs are using reseeded areas of moorland where acid grassland has been harrowed, reseeded and limed. This has striking parallels with observations made in Ireland in 1982 (IDB personal

Index of usage (F/A)

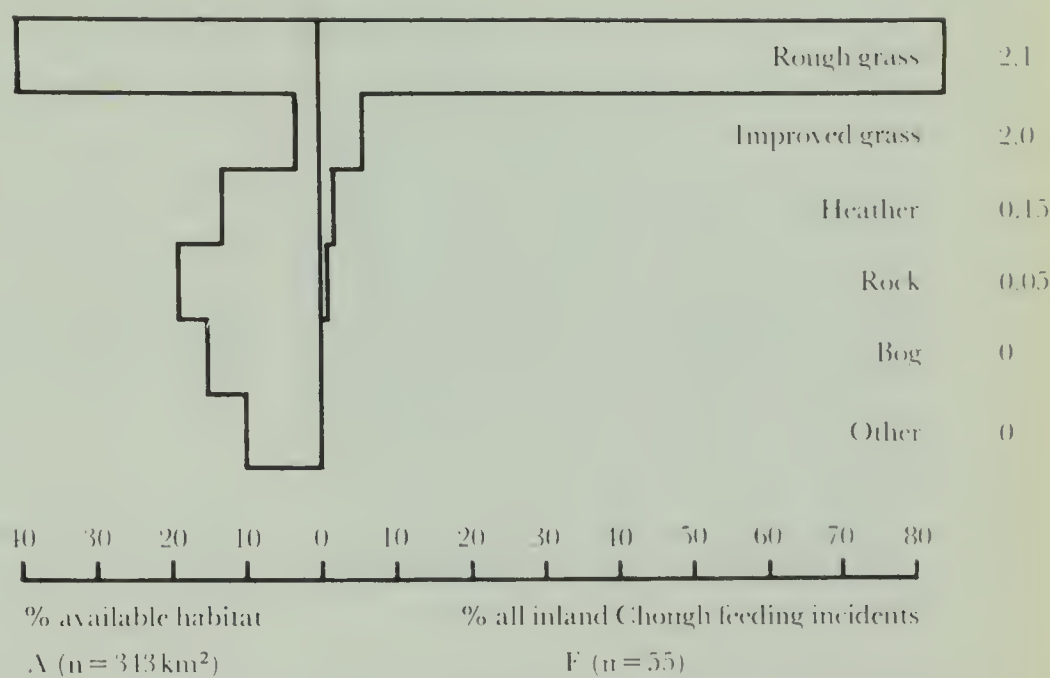


Fig. 7. Selection by inland Choughs *Pyrhcorax pyrrhcorax* of habitats for feeding in relation to habitat-availability in survey areas

observations), where at one inland mountain area dominated by acid rocks (e.g. quartzite) several Chough sites were located in crags above bands of limestone where a richer, ‘sweeter’ turf was available.

On the basis that pairs feed within 1km of their nest sites, the survey habitat data were re-analysed for those 1-km squares *without* breeding Choughs, those with one breeding pair, and those with either more than one pair or in which Chough flocks were seen feeding. The results support the idea that the quality of coastal habitats influences Chough distribution: the squares with the highest breeding densities also had the greatest proportion of rough grass and maritime turf: key feeding habitats (fig. 8). The importance of a grazing regime to feeding Choughs is demonstrated by analysing feeding records according to livestock present (table 5). Traditional pasture grazed by sheep appears to be the most favoured combination. Sheep grazing gives the closest-cropped sward (Moore 1966); measurements in Ireland found vegetation height to be only 1-3cm in the best feeding areas. Sheep and cattle faeces also contribute dung beetles

Table 5. Survey of Choughs *Pyrhcorax pyrrhcorax* in Britain and Ireland in 1982: number of feeding incidents in relation to grazing regime
n = 499. Several incidents involved more than one livestock type

Livestock	Machair	Maritime turf	Rough grass	Improved grass	Heather
Sheep	6	28	185	13	3
Cattle	3	3	72	26	5
Horses	0	0	16	0	0
None	16	94	51	20	26

% total area occupied by each habitat type

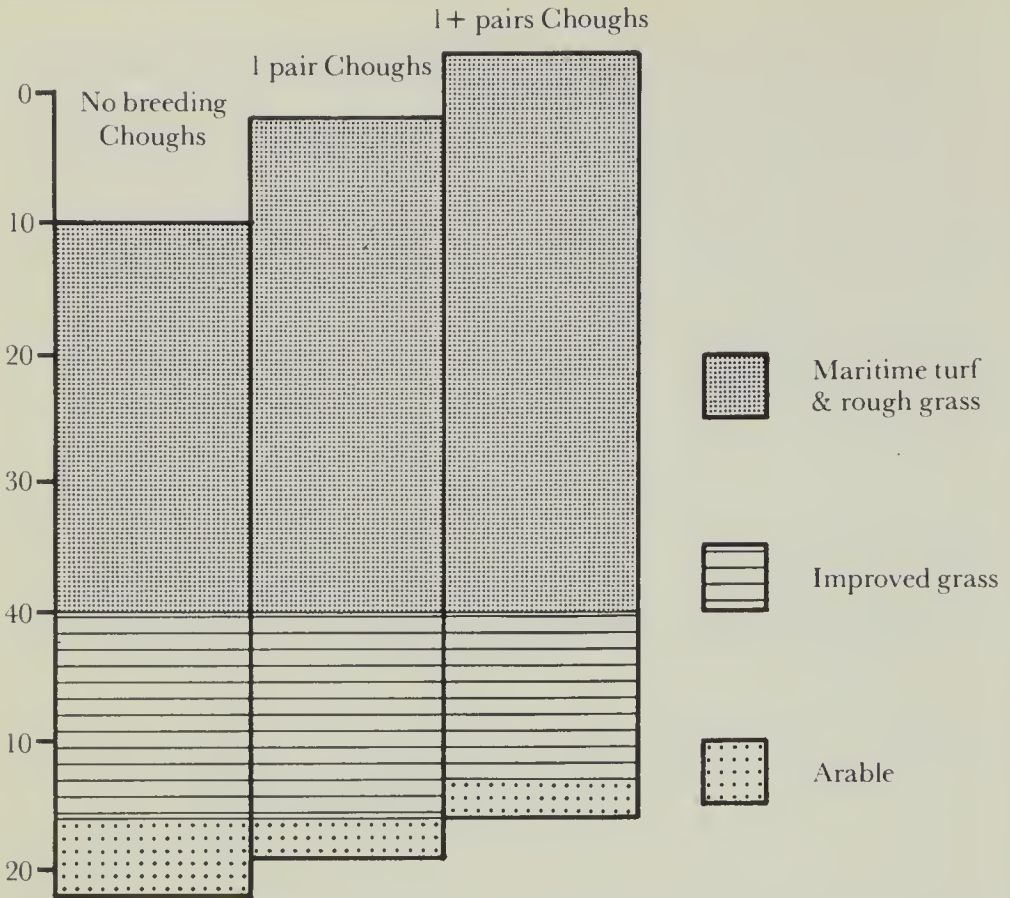


Fig. 8. Habitat proportions in areas of different breeding density of Choughs *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*

Aphodius as a food source. In Scotland, short pasture grazed by cattle is the main feeding habitat in all seasons; dung beetles are the staple food and adult beetles occurred in 90% of samples of nestling diet (Warnes 1982). The high number of feeding incidents in maritime turf without livestock is no doubt due to its naturally low growth form. This vegetation is usually 1 cm or less in height as a result of extreme exposure in winter. It is sometimes grazed by sheep and can be rich in leatherjackets in summer.

Factors affecting numbers and distribution

At nearly 1,000 pairs, the British and Irish population must represent a significant proportion of the European population, particularly in view of reported declines at several other European stations (Sorci *et al.* 1971; S. Lovari *in litt.*; A. Thomas *in litt.*). It seems pertinent, therefore, to review the factors that may be affecting Choughs here, and bring up to date those first itemised by Rolfe (1966).

Land-use changes

More than any other single factor isolated by the survey, grazing illustrates how changes in land use impinge on the Chough and its ecology. There are several cases where changes in livestock (with consequent changes in the habitat) appear to have affected Chough populations. On Ramsey Island,

Dyfed, farming ceased around 1968 and livestock were removed. At this time, the island held eight breeding pairs of Choughs. In the following years, the proportion of rough grass fell from nearly 70% to 40%. In these years, rabbits *Oryctolagus cuniculus* provided the only grazing pressure, and Choughs fed noticeably in these areas (Cowdy 1973). By 1975, rank heather and bracken occupied over half the island, and the Chough numbers fell to four pairs, the level at which they have remained (Bullock *et al.* 1983c). On Bardsey in 1958, Hayward (1958) considered the stock-carrying capacity to be far from realised. Today it must be near the limit, with over 400 sheep and 25 Connemara ponies. Chough numbers on Bardsey have risen from two breeding pairs in 1958 to seven in 1981; the present system of intensive mixed grazing throughout the island seems much to their liking.

The recent history of the Calf of Man tells a similar story. Farming ceased on the island in 1958 when it became a bird observatory. At this time, there were at least 30 resident Choughs, including ten breeding pairs. With the removal of the livestock, the short-grazed pasture became increasingly rank, until by 1970 it was described as 'very overgrown', with the associated spread of bracken into grassland areas. At this stage, the Chough numbers were at their lowest: only 12 birds including four breeding pairs, which raised no young. In 1969, Loghtan sheep were introduced for the first time. In the next ten years, these built up to around 100 ewes; the Chough has shown a parallel recovery, doubling in the last ten years to eight breeding pairs (in 1982), which raised 21-22 young (Bullock *et al.* 1983b) (fig. 9).

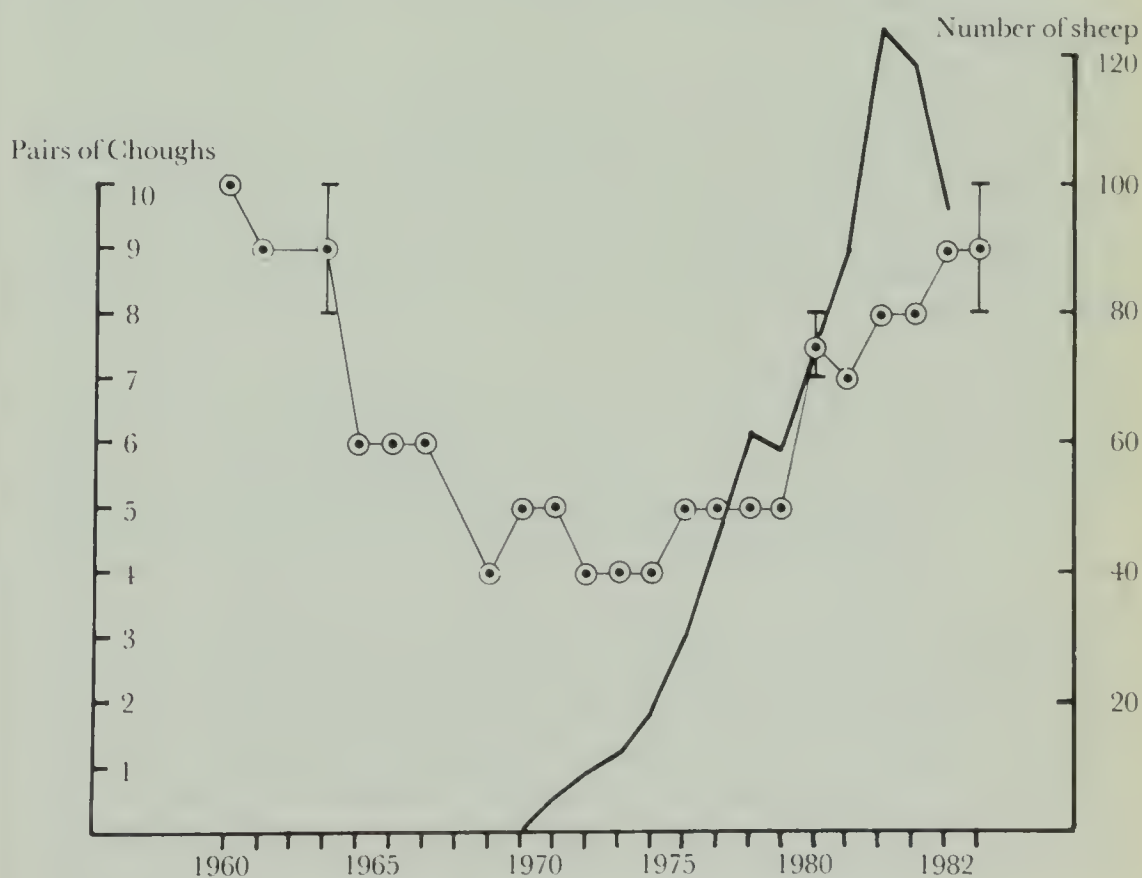


Fig. 9. Numbers of breeding Choughs *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* and number of sheep on the Calf of Man during 1959-82

The way Chough numbers seem to respond to such stocking levels suggests both a clue to some of the past declines and the key to its future welfare. Might it be that major changes in land use in coastal areas were responsible for the shrinkage in the Chough's range during the last century?

From 1846 (with the repeal of the Corn Laws) to 1870 was the 'Golden Age' of farming. This coincides with the disappearance of Choughs from many areas. Other forces must have interacted with this. For example, in the 1860s the railway arrived in Cornwall. This led to a boom in dairy farming to supply the demand for milk in London, with the consequent improvement of Cornish coastal pastures. With the two world wars, ploughing and cropping also burgeoned. These times pushed arable land and managed pastures right up to the cliff edge, and the 1920s and 1940s saw the last Chough losses from the north Cornish coast; the terrible winter of 1946/47 may have set the final seal on the last breeding pairs there (fig. 1).

Similar forces are still at work today. The shifts in fortune of the island populations on Bardsey, Ramsey and the Calf are eloquent witness to the role of livestock in the Chough's fate. The spread of arable farming is a more serious threat. In Brittany, Chough pairs have disappeared recently from those areas where ploughed land has pushed right to the coast; they survive now only on a few headlands and islands where the narrow coastal strip of maritime heath or sheep- and cattle-grazed pasture is still intact.

Parts of Dyfed already look remarkably similar to Cornwall; it is perhaps only the greater proportion of sheep-grazed pasture that sustains the present Chough population there. Areas in western Dyfed which used to have breeding Choughs now closely resemble unsuitable breeding areas (Bullock *et al.* 1983c) (fig. 10). In Northern Ireland, such changes may have had their effect already. The population there has dwindled from 21-22 pairs in 1963 to around ten pairs at present. The decline there is perhaps partly due to improvement of coastal pastures, but also indirectly to the associated clifftop fencing, which allows formerly grazed slopes to revert to bracken or scrub.

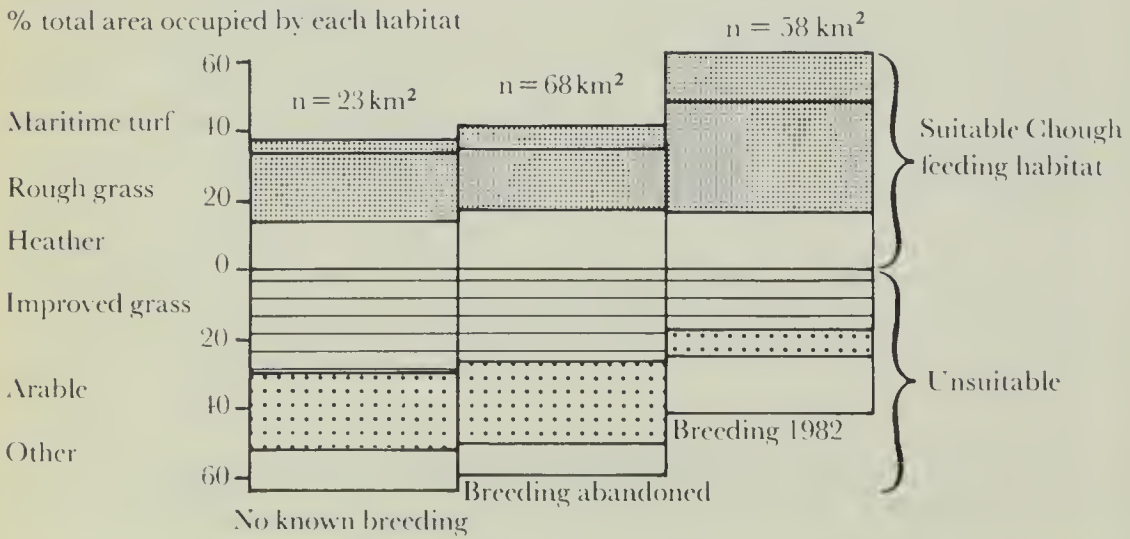


Fig. 10. Habitat proportions in present and former breeding areas of Choughs *Pyrrhcorax pyrrhcorax* in coastal Wales

Human disturbance

Though tourist pressure has increased in recent years, the cliffs and rough grassland where Choughs nest and feed are still relatively free of people. Tourist development at some coastal sites may displace some feeding Choughs, though in general the species is extremely tolerant of human presence and continues to breed at several tourist spots. Prolonged disturbance, such as climbing in inland quarries in the vicinity of traditional nest sites, seems the only serious form of direct threat.

Human persecution

Ryves (1948) mentioned gintraps set on cliffs for rabbits as slaying many Choughs in Cornwall in the early 1900s. Although such traps are uncommon today, a corpse with a smashed leg found in Co. Kerry in 1979 (HDB personal observation) probably met a similar fate. Shooting certainly killed many Choughs in former times, and they are occasionally still illegally shot today by farmers in mistake for crows. Reports from Brittany (A. Thomas *in litt.*) suggest that shooting for sport remains a serious threat to Choughs there: a couple of offshore islands now hold most of those remaining.

In the past, eggs and young were both taken regularly (the latter for pets). It is not known to what extent this occurs today, though at least one site in North Wales is known to have been robbed nearly every year when the young are about three weeks old (R. Fisher *in litt.*).

Isolation and inbreeding

Choughs are extremely sedentary, which means that once extinct in an area (as in Cornwall) recolonisation may take some time. There is, however, clearly a dispersal of young birds in their first autumn and winter, with individuals recovered up to 140km from their natal site. The recolonisation of Anglesey almost certainly occurred from mainland Wales, probably from colonies 30 to 40km distant at the time. With a known range of 140km, we can speculate that Cornwall could be recolonised from Pembrokeshire (100km away) or less possibly from Brittany (160km away). The likelihood of inbreeding being a serious problem in isolated populations is unknown. The considerable distances which young birds can fly during their first-year dispersal would diminish this threat, through the sporadic arrival of immigrants from outside areas.

Disease

The effects of disease on Choughs are little documented. Chough chicks found dead on Bardsey (S. Cowdy *in litt.* 1967) showed no evidence of disease or parasites. Juveniles caught on Bardsey in 1979 carried many parasites, though this was more likely a result of being in poor condition. In two post-mortems of adults from Wales, death has been linked possibly to pseudo-tuberculosis: one was positive, the other uncertain. Lameness, a symptom of pseudo-tuberculosis in domestic turkeys, is occasionally noted in wild Choughs. Aspergillosis has been mentioned as occurring among Choughs caught at winter roosts (G. King *in litt.*).

Toxic chemicals

At the height of the organo-pesticides problem in the 1960s, three Chough corpses analysed had low levels of DDE, dieldrin and mercury (Rolfe 1966). The use of such chemicals was probably much lower on the western coasts than elsewhere, and dieldrin, aldrin and DDT are now widely banned. The threat of sheep-dip chemicals seems slight. The consumption of grain in autumn and winter (Bullock 1980) may expose Choughs to mercury, though they usually feed in stubbles rather than on the treated, winter-sown seed.

Climate

The climate on the west coast of the British Isles is different from elsewhere in the Chough's range, where it inhabits rocky, mountainous country. The Atlantic coasts enjoy milder winters (e.g. average minimum temperatures not less than 4.5°C), leading one to speculate that winter temperatures may limit the Chough's range. The maritime climate usually guarantees freedom from the snow and frosts which bury or freeze its feeding grounds. The warmer winter soil temperatures may also sustain greater insect activity, crucial to its diet. The feeding congregations in machair are an example of this: a habitat where high soil insect numbers and freedom from frost guarantee a winter food resource.

BTO ringing returns show that most Chough deaths are in February (fig. 4). There is evidence of increased mortality in severe winter weather which probably caused a fall in the number of breeding pairs in mid Wales in 1982 (Bullock *et al.* 1983c). This may explain the better performance of coastal pairs compared with the inland populations. Though climate may dictate the Chough's general distribution at these latitudes, it cannot explain all of the past declines. It might account for the disappearance from many inland stations in the last century, but not from the southern counties of England. Rolfe (1966) noted that the decline of the Chough in some areas matches the period of cold winters and wet summers between 1820 and 1880. On closer analysis, this theory is less conclusive. The worst periods of sustained cold in the 19th century were during 1837-55 and 1878-98, whereas many breeding areas, as far apart as Cornwall and the Western Isles of Scotland, were abandoned between 1860 and 1880.

Predation

There is very little evidence identifying the main predators of the Chough. Mammalian predators have been suggested (Rolfe 1966), but these would be lucky indeed even to reach a nest. Choughs nesting in buildings may be more vulnerable. Warnes (1982) considered ferrets *Mustela furo*, rats *Rattus* and feral cats *Felis* to be possible culprits for such predation of nests on Islay. The reaction of feeding flocks to Ravens or Peregrines *Falco peregrinus* is unequivocal: the Choughs take to the wing. This suggests that both may be occasional predators, but the Peregrine has been unfairly cast as the implacable enemy of Chough. As the two are often neighbours, some skirmishes are inevitable, but actual kills are extremely rare (Ratcliffe 1980). Other evidence (Bullock *et al.* 1983a) suggests that Great Black-

backed Gulls *Larus marinus* may be a more significant predator, especially of juveniles.

Competition

The degree to which Chough competes with other crows is poorly understood. At one time, the Jackdaw was thought to have ousted the Chough from much of its range; this idea is now generally discredited. Though their diets do overlap to some extent, the Jackdaw is, in general, a surface feeder, whilst the Chough digs deep for its food. Where they are adjacent, Choughs use the thin, poorer soils (e.g. rough pasture and heathland), whilst Jackdaws and Rooks are more attracted to the better farmland soils of improved pasture or arable (Bullock 1980). If the Chough's success is due to its ability to exploit such marginal land, how far is the continued improvement of coastal pasture bringing the Rook and the Jackdaw into competition with it?

Discussion

Looking back to the 1963 survey and comparing the results, county by county, with the figures for 1982, we conclude that the Chough population has basically been stable, with evidence of a few local increases in the past 20 years. There has been a probable increase in Scotland (Warnes 1983), and also in Wales (Bullock *et al.* 1983c). The Isle of Man population appears stable (Bullock *et al.* 1983b). Although there has been a decline in Northern Ireland, in the rest of Ireland the main population remains healthy and stable. Yet the Chough is a rare bird, and appears ever to have

162. Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*, Islay, Scotland, 1975 (Rodney Dawson)





163. Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*, Islay, Scotland, May 1981 (*Martin B. Withers*)

been so. The reasons must lie in its own biology. For example, why is the Chough (which at all other times of year is as social as are Rooks and Jackdaws) a solitary nester? With its specialised diet, perhaps pairs are spaced out in order to guarantee sufficient food for their young. On the coast, nests are spaced over 1 km apart; significantly, pairs fed within an average of 1 km of the nest. Inland, the spacing of nests is twice this, and pairs must fly twice as far for food. Occasionally, natural nest sites may be a limiting factor, as occurs in machair areas in Ireland, where Choughs may resort to old buildings to take advantage of good feeding habitats away from

cliffs. In general, however, it appears that Chough breeding density is controlled by the quality of feeding habitat, and that coastal feeding habitats are richer than those available inland. Elsewhere in the world, the Chough seems to be a bird of montane grasslands; its poorer breeding performance in inland areas in Britain and Ireland suggests that this traditional niche is not ideal at these latitudes. The analysis of habitat usage from the 1982 survey shows the importance to Choughs of marginal land—dry maritime heath, maritime turf, machair and traditional pasture—and the vital role of grazing by livestock in maintaining them as suitable feeding habitats. This makes the Chough dependent on a landscape created largely by man. Indeed, it is hard to imagine that Choughs were so widespread before human activity created the open habitats in which they can feed. The Chough stronghold remains 'the Celtic fringe': the traditional sheepwalks and rough cattle pastures of the west. Presumably only in maritime areas can it find the combination of mild winters and a guaranteed year-round abundance of soil invertebrates.

Of all the factors reviewed in this paper as possible influences on Chough numbers, it is our opinion that changing land-use is potentially the most serious. There is a strong case for believing that agricultural improvements caused the extinctions from the English counties. Such changes are still at work in Welsh and Northern Irish coastal areas, and forestry is a new threat to some upland feeding grounds.

Elsewhere in Britain and Ireland, the present population seems secure. In most Irish and Welsh areas, sheep numbers are as high as (and often higher than) in the past. The future of the Chough would seem assured so long as traditional farming practices are maintained within the narrow coastal strip on which it depends.

Future monitoring

Another comprehensive population survey may not be necessary for 20 years or so. Until then, a simple census method would be to identify the main winter feeding areas (e.g. machair) and winter roost sites, and to use such counts to form an annual index of the Chough population.

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Summary

The 1982 International Chough Survey located a total of 905 breeding pairs in Britain and Ireland, the bulk of them in Ireland (567-682 pairs). Wales held 139-142 pairs, Scotland 61-72 pairs and the Isle of Man 49-60 pairs. In Brittany, 25-35 pairs were recorded. In addition, a total of 825-858 non-breeding Choughs was found, representing 31-32% of the total summer population. General distribution remains almost exactly as shown in *The Atlas* (Sharrock 1976). The Irish population appears stable, as does that of the Isle of Man; there have probably been increases in Wales and Scotland, and declines in Northern Ireland and Brittany.

Of all pairs, 86% were coastal; only in Co. Kerry and North Wales were there significant numbers breeding inland. Choughs are not colonial: nests were spaced 1.4km apart on average. Average clutch size throughout was 3.88 eggs, and fledging success was 2.38 young per pair. Scottish Choughs laid the most eggs, but had the lowest breeding success; Irish birds laid fewest, but with greatest fledging success. Mortality appears to be high in the first two years of life, with greatest losses in the winter months, especially February.

The Chough relies on access to the soil where it can dig for soil invertebrates. Feeding records showed the importance of rough unimproved grassland grazing by sheep or cattle. Machair and maritime turf were also important feeding habitats; improved pasture and arable land were not. The implication is that the quality of coastal habitats influences Chough numbers, particularly as 88% of pairs were found to feed within 1 km of the nest site. Inland pairs also relied on sheep-grazed mountain pasture, but at some sites liming of upland pastures attracts feeding Choughs.

Factors affecting the Choughs are reviewed. At the latitudes of Britain and Ireland, climate probably dictates its broadly maritime distribution. Within this constraint, it is largely dependent on patterns of human land use. The poorer grazed pastures appear to be its niche; it remains vulnerable to any change from the pastoral tradition, either by removal of livestock (which allows bracken or scrub to develop) or intensification towards dairy or arable farming (which deplete soil invertebrate faunas).

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Personalities

32 David Hunt

FIELD CHARACTERS

Plumage, size and jizz: variable. In my field sketch of 14 years ago, he looks like portly Beatle. Present plumage much fresher (I suspect improved preening, or interesting case of reversed moult). Difficult to age. Looks younger than he did. In fact, born in 1934, at height of spring migration. He is a Taurus.

VOICE Usually loud and confident; but can be sullen and suspicious on telephone until he knows to whom he's talking. Other calls: contented snore; and hearty laugh. Can also produce mellifluous bellowing noises, by blowing a trombone (not recorded recently).

DISTRIBUTION Long thought to be restricted to Scilly, but recently recorded as far away as southern Himalayas, California, and the Sinai.



164. David Hunt (Frank Gibson)

MOVEMENTS Complex meanderings as immature indicate tendency to vagrancy. Reared on Dartmoor by naturalist father; as fledgling, he recalls being able to separate Brambling and Chaffinch before he could read their names. The Juvenile Hunt attended Gresham's School in Norfolk (near enough to Cley to be 'taught' his birds by R. A. Richardson), and the Sub-adult did National Service in the West Country. A Career Adviser told him that he would never make a living out of birds, so in 1954 he went to Art School, to become a Jazz Musician. During late 1950s, he spread around Germany, playing trombone and occasionally birdwatching (his best 'tick' was a Black Stork in Schleswig-Holstein, which he doesn't remember seeing, as he was very drunk at the time). Having reached breeding age, he nested in London and worked in a Gents Outfitters and as a Horticultural Expert on the roof of Derry and Toms. This erratic eruptive behaviour ceased in 1964, when he flew south and settled for five consecutive years as the Gardener of the Island Hotel on Tresco. The management warned him 'not to talk to the guests about birds'. The guests, however, offered him money to do just that, and he began organising weekly birdwatching boat-trips. In 1969, he moved to the Big City—Hugh Town on St Mary's—to seek fame and fortune. He still lives there.

PRESENT STATUS Scilly's 'man on the spot'. Holiday organiser, slide-lecturer and tour leader, RSPB rep., and BTO rep. A guide to 'dudes', and an adviser to 'twitchers'. In his own words: 'An ornithological entrepreneur. A buffer between birders and islanders. A bit of a father figure'. He makes a living out of birds.

BEHAVIOUR As a birder, David is suspicious of 'glib experts', healthily sceptical and well practised at spotting 'duff gen'. A quintessential non-stringer, he never pushes a dodgy sighting, and admits his blindspots—which are, in fact, few. Not, however, a meticulous note-taker, he relies more on 'instinct' and 'jizz'. He is very rarely wrong. In 1976, however, he made one big mistake: he found a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, the bird he blames for provoking the annual Scilly 'twitching' invasion. After three or four years of claustrophobia, he has now learnt to cope: 'October is the time I give up birding!'. Instead, he presides over the Porthcressa Restaurant's 'Birder's Nightclub', organising such Scilly Season events as 'Bird Brain of Scilly', and the 'Birders' Ball', at which he himself has appeared dressed as the aforesaid sapsucker and as a Greater Yellowlegs.

Scilly twitchers may find it hard to understand why he doesn't join them in their quests for 'cripplers and sibes'. This is David Hunt's reply: 'I LIVE here. If I tried to keep up with them all, I'd be worn to a frazzle. Besides, Scilly is my home "patch"—a Jay would be a local tick for me, a Black-billed Cuckoo wouldn't! I enjoy finding my own birds and the "egotistical pleasure" of identifying them for myself. Mind you, I do get sick of "little brown jobs".'

So, what would he do if he saw a 'possible Blyth's Reed'? He says: 'I'd look the other way!'

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W. E. ODDIE

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In my experience, a sensibly-priced good field jacket has been difficult to find. Over the years, I have tried all kinds, from army surplus (practical and cheap, if you can find them) to the well-known oiled-cloth brand (excellent, if you don't mind the oil—and the smell), and all sorts in between, most of which seem designed more for fashion than for practical requirement in the field.

On a recent visit to Sweden, I found the answer. It was really not hard to spot, because it seemed that about 80% of the birdwatchers around Falsterbo were wearing the same make of field jacket—*Fjällräven*—which must be some sort of recommendation. From several suitable-looking jackets in the *Fjällräven* brochure, I chose the Hunter 8105. With four large outside pockets, and an interior buttoned breast pocket, there is plenty of storage space for the largest of notebooks and other birdwatcher's paraphernalia. With shower-repellant cloth, complete double lining, and lightweight hood (which can be rolled away into a zipped compartment in the collar), there is adequate protection in all but continuous rain. Better shower resistance can be obtained by impregnating the cloth with *Fjällräven* 'Greenland wax', but I found that applying this—with a block of wax and a warm iron—was pretty tedious. Usefully, the Hunter is a more-or-less all-temperature jacket, reasonably lightweight in warm weather or spacious enough for a thick pullover to be worn beneath it in the cold, when the sensible hand-warming pockets behind the lower pockets are also a boon. A trouble-free two-way zip; draw-strings around the hood, waist and hem; and press-stud closures down the front, on all outside pockets, and on the wrists, complete what is clearly a field jacket which has been thoughtfully designed for rugged outdoor use: ideal for birdwatchers' purposes. The cost is £47.00.

All *Fjällräven* garments carry the 'sleeping fox' trademark emblazoned prominently on the outside, so often the sign of manufacturers who are proud of their wares; and rightly so in this case.

P. J. GRANT

Seventy-five years ago...

'Whether birds, with their large semi-circular canals, have a sense of direction or whether their migrations are carried out by the aid of the sun or by the earth's magnetism or any other power is moot, yet one thing seems certain and that is that they possess a powerful memory. I feel sure that however the migrational movement as a whole is effected, the way in which the Swallow returns year after year to the same old beam in the same old barn is simply memory—topographical knowledge of the chief natural features and the general mould of the country in the neighbourhood of its nesting home.' From 'Bird roosts and routes' by B. F. Cummings. (*Brit. Birds* 2: 123-124, September 1908)

Points of view

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

4. Telescopes and tripods

The chances are that I am a not-very-knowlegeable, even a mere 'week-end' birdwatcher: at least the 'Binoculars and telescopes survey' (*Brit. Birds* 76: 155-161) would infer so, as I neither own nor use a tripod with my telescope. Still, it is well worth having my expertise doubted just to be called a birdwatcher, instead of that objectionable term 'birder', which fortunately refers only to tripod owners. I have looked through many telescopes on other people's tripods and even examined several in shops. I recently went so far as to get out my cheque book, but, due to the fortuitous lack of a cheque card at the time, had the narrowest escape from spending more than £200 on 'scope and 'pod complete. What worries me is that I'm not sure how much longer I can resist: I even came close to buying one of those things with a convenient knurled knob, when I knew all along that it was not where I would have put it. But a tripod? No, I cannot yet persuade myself to buy a tripod: every little touch, every breath of wind, or a blink of the eye resulting in shakes and trembles with the image dancing about all over the place; every movement of the bird necessitating adjustments with three hands all at once; every stop requiring a fight with the wretched thing to get it out of the car and entanglements with everyone else trying to do the same. And who wants to cart it about up hills and over moors, or through a wood? No, I would far rather use my old draw-tube job, which I can jam securely and solidly against the branches of a tree, or on a wall, or against a post, or, if the worst comes to the worst, on someone else's head; or I can lie down with one end firmly between hand and knee, the other making a firm connection with my eye socket. If I get a wet patch around the region of my undertail-coverts, then it will have been worth it for the good view. Let the experts stick to their tripods: someone, somewhere, in the three-legged marketing business must be grinning broadly at the marvellous job of persuading so many people to buy something they didn't really want!

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Mystery photographs

81 This remarkable portrait of a flying duck, clearly of the genus *Anas*, displays nearly all the major plumage areas unusually well. Size cannot be judged, but the underwing pattern and the shape and weight of the bill all point to a teal. The pale-toned panel on the inner upperwing takes you quickly on to three possible species: the uncommon Garganey *A. querquedula*, the rare Blue-winged Teal *A. discors* (a vagrant from the Nearctic) and the Cinnamon Teal *A. cyanoptera* (imported to wildfowl collections, bred in a few and hence a potential escapee).



At this point, the going—in black-and-white—gets tougher. The sharp outline and tones of the upper forewing panel suggest, however, that the contained colour is uniform and unmarked. This does not accord with the upperwing patterns of either female or immature Garganey, which include distinct mottling on the rather dull forewing panels. Furthermore, the speculum is not distinctly bordered white, fore and aft; the lack of a distinct white trailing edge also rules out Garganey. So, you are left with the difficult distinction of Blue-winged from Cinnamon Teal.

Can you age and sex the bird? Well, it is not an adult drake of either species, which would show dark bodies, spotted on Blue-winged and uniform on Cinnamon, and dark heads, with a 'reversed new moon crescent' before the eye on Blue-winged and no such mark at all on Cinnamon. What you see instead is the typical head and body of a female or immature; so, where do you look? At the head, for in its pattern lie the best clues. Under a dark crown, we see an obvious, pale supercilium, a dark

165. Mystery photograph 82. Identify the species. Answer next month



eye-stripe, a dark smudge on the upper ear-coverts and a well-defined pale spot on the lores. The pattern is distinct and this favours Blue-winged and not the dully patterned Cinnamon. Is there a clincher? Yes, there is (though only a camera would spot it in a flight view): the bill shape recalls Garganey rather than Teal and certainly has no hint of a 'shovel' about it. Once again, Blue-winged is favoured, for the bill of Cinnamon is quite deep and straight in profile. The odds are definitely on Blue-winged.

The bird is in fact a female or immature male Blue-winged Teal, which was present at Huttoft Pit, Lincolnshire, in September 1982. Much credit goes to the redoubtable Keith Atkin for getting such an excellent study in his single exposure. The photograph would have made an excellent illustration for Malcolm Ogilvie's and my paper on 'Distinguishing Blue-winged and Cinnamon Teals' (*Brit. Birds* 70: 290-294). D. I. M. WALLACE

Notes



Hen Harrier with rufous-orange underparts A large harrier *Circus* with rich rufous-orange underparts was present on Fair Isle, Shetland, from 25th August to 8th October 1982. It was a large, heavy ring-tail, whose silhouette at times recalled Marsh Harrier *C. aeruginosus*. It was clearly too heavy for Montagu's Harrier *C. pygargus*, and its unpatterned face ruled out that species and Pallid Harrier *C. macrourus*. Its size denoted Hen Harrier *C. cyaneus*, almost certainly a large female. We considered the possibility that it was a 'Northern Harrier', the Nearctic race *hudsonius* of the Hen Harrier (cf. Wallace 1971), but felt that it was not a member of that race because:

- (1) its face, though paler brown than its crown, was unpatterned;
- (2) its wing-coverts, though a shade paler than its mantle, were uniform in colour: there was definitely no pale panel along the mid-wing; there was also no rufous tone to its upperparts;
- (3) its underparts were rich rufous-orange, richest on upper breast and whitest from lower belly to undertail-coverts, but this rufous-orange was the background colour to a series of dark brown streaks running down its entire breast and on to its belly, this streaking being densest on upper breast.

The three features of unpatterned face, uniform brown wing-coverts and well-marked streaking on underparts all suggest that it was not a Nearctic vagrant, though the well-marked streaking is perhaps the only consistently reliable feature ruling out Northern Harrier (cf. Grant 1983). This observation, however, draws attention to rufous-orange underparts as a possible character of first-year Eurasian, nominate Hen Harriers. Thus, coloration alone is not sufficient to confirm the identification of the Nearctic race in Britain.

I am grateful to P. J. Grant for arranging for me to see an advance copy of his paper when it was in press.

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Hybrid Coot × Moorhen resembling American Coot in Suffolk On 27th February 1981, S. H. Piotrowski was scanning through a raft of Coots *Fulica atra* at Alton Water, Suffolk, when he observed a smaller bird superficially resembling a Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*, but possessing a few obvious characters of Coot. Somewhat puzzled, he considered a hybrid as a possibility, but otherwise put the incident to the back of his mind.

On 28th February, in conversation with D. R. Moore, M. Marsh, P. W. Murphy and C. S. Waller, the subject moved to the American Coot *F. americana* which CSW had recently seen in Ireland. SHP, aware of the considerable similarity between the description of the Irish bird and the one he had seen the previous day, particularly with regard to the size, raised the question of a possible American Coot.

On 1st March, all five observers visited Alton Water and relocated the bird; the following description has been compiled from their notes.

SIZE AND SHAPE Approximately two-thirds size of Coot. When in water, strongly resembled Coot in outline, having short neck, and body held horizontal. Unlike Coot, tail raised, but not cocked as is often the case with Moorhen. When swimming, primaries almost completely exposed, indicating short tertials. When on land, more closely resembled Moorhen, with tail frequently flicked; legs noticeably longer and thinner than Coot; and toes more slender, but lobed. Head identical to Coot's, but smaller, with similar bill shape, and obvious but ill-defined frontal shield. One strange feature: two slight 'humps' on back, most prominent when bird swimming. In flight, body and wings looked longer and more slender than Coot's. Flight action and silhouette similar to Moorhen's.

PLUMAGE Head black; flanks and mantle slate grey, with sheens of bronze/green. Upperwing-coverts and secondaries slate grey; primaries grey, tinged brown; no white trailing edge to secondaries, but faint white leading edge to wing. Breast and belly grey; underwing almost black, with pale grey greater underwing-coverts. Tail black on

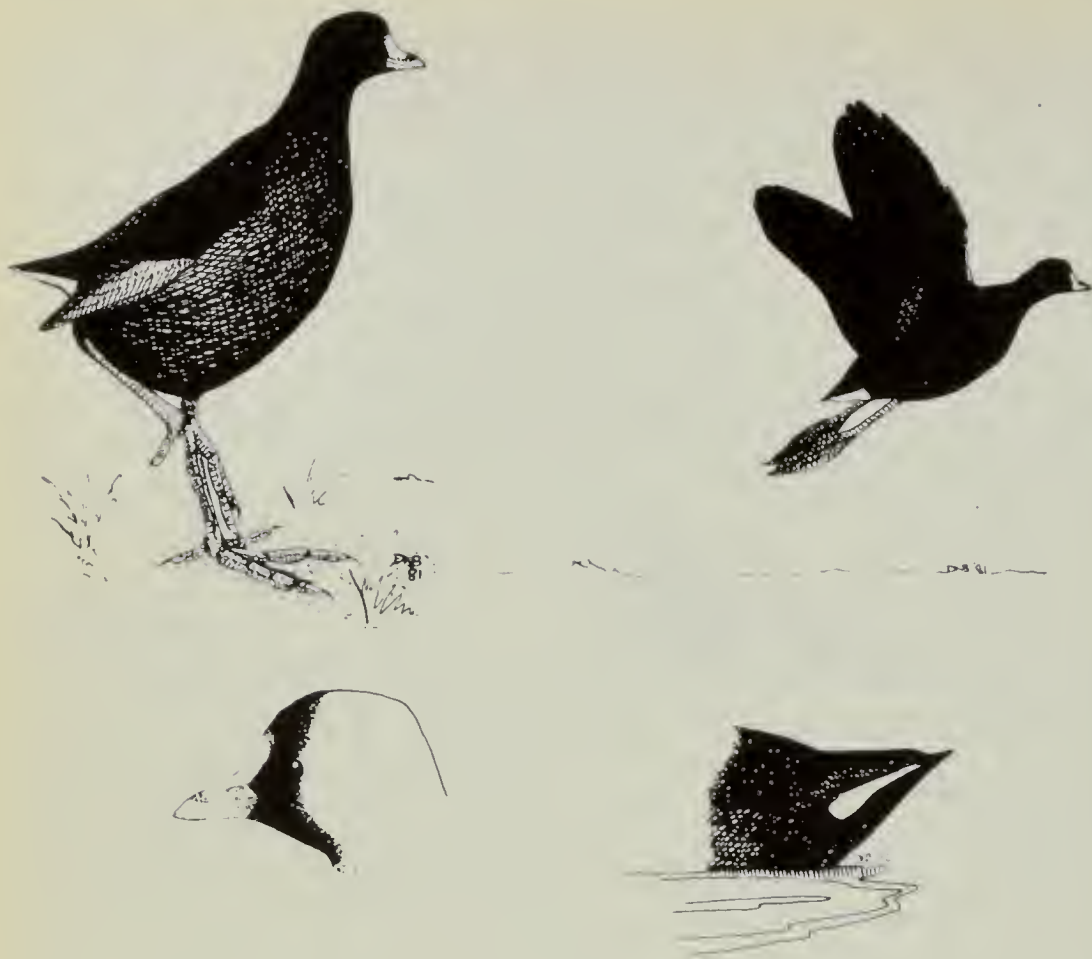
upper surface, but with under-surface pattern similar to Moorhen's, with less extensive white. End of undertail-coverts formed shape of inverted horseshoe.

BARE PARTS Bill pale yellow, with lemon cutting edge, but colour of old ivory at tip and olive green at base. (American Coot has generally greyish bill if juvenile, and white with reddish band if adult.) Frontal shield dirty-white, with yellowish tinge. Legs greenish/yellow, with vermilion spot at tibia; toes greyish/blue, lobed.

HABITS Fed constantly with Coots, both in water and on margins of reservoir. Rarely seen with Moorhens. In the main, picked up food from surface of water, but frequently up-ended in manner of dabbling duck. Initially, observed diving only once (F. K. Cobb), and this thought to have been defensive/evasive action. Subsequently, SHP and MM saw it dive apparently for food. Tail flicked just prior to leaving water; and also on land, when walking in sedate manner. When swimming, head nodded in rhythm with action of feet.

166. Coot *Fulica atra* and hybrid Coot × Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*, Suffolk, February 1981 (J. Bakewell)





Many observers ultimately saw this bird, and opinion as to its identity was divided. The initial but guarded reaction of the observers already named was that it was possibly an immature American Coot. CSW had reservations because of the colour of the frontal shield and bill. After much discussion and altercation, the possibility of a hybrid was considered, but at the time many thought this to be genetically impossible. In fact, the mere mention of hybridisation was greeted with scepticism. Several attempts were made to catch the bird, but to no avail.

Subsequently, a thorough search was made of the available literature concentrating on descriptions of immature American Coots. It was soon clear that the literature was inconsistent, but, even so, the bird could not be definitely identified as American Coot: the colour of the bill and frontal shield was not consistent with American Coot, nor was the lack of white on the trailing edge of the secondaries. Skins were also examined, but did not provide conclusive evidence.

Eventually, documented proof was discovered of hybridisation between American Coot and Florida Gallinule *G. chloropus cachinnans* in the United States (McIlhenny 1937) and between Coot and Moorhen in Europe (Sucheter 1897, Foschi 1979). Foschi quoted an instance in Italy where a male Moorhen was paired with a female Coot and a nest was built and clutch laid; seven chicks were hatched, and two fledged, one of which was obtained. The description and photographs of this specimen closely resemble the Suffolk bird. Even more interesting was the rumour that Coot



Figs. 1 & 2. Left and above, hybrid Coot *Fulica atra* × Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*, Suffolk, February 1981 (D. Bakewell)

and Moorhen had hybridised at Nacton Decoy, Suffolk, many years previously; but, sadly, the exact circumstances are now lost.

The Alton Water bird was watched during the subsequent months to see if a moult and eventual colour or structure change in the bill or frontal shield would take place. This did not happen, and the bird was still at Alton Water until at least March 1982.

The conclusion is, therefore, that it was a hybrid between Moorhen and Coot.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS We are greatly indebted to P. J. Grant and A. Pym for encouragement and the provision of valuable references; to Jon Dunn for excerpts and comments from the American literature; to Chris Harbard for assistance with references; to P. Wheeler for arranging the examination of skins; to D. Bakewell and J. Bakewell for providing the sketches and photographs respectively; to D. Revett and I. Peters for their efforts in trying to catch the bird; and to the many observers who offered so much constructive comment.

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Hybrid Coot × Moorhen in North Yorkshire The bird in my photograph (plate 167) has been resident at Carlton Towers, near Selby, North Yorkshire, since summer 1982 until at least February 1983, but I do not know if it originated there.

It is basically the same shape as a Coot *Fulica atra*, though it is between Coot and Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* in size. The body, head and neck are

grey/black, but the wings and mantle are brown. The frontal shield and bill are shaped like those of a Coot, but the shield is orange, fading to yellow at the tip of the bill, and half the lower mandible is yellow from the tip backwards. The leg colour is as a Moorhen, even with the red 'garter', but the toes are lobed, like a Coot's.



167. Hybrid Coot *Fulica atra* × Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*, North Yorkshire, winter 1982/83 (G. Flower)

The hybrid (should we call it a 'Coochen'?) is equally at home foraging in the vegetation at the waterside as it is diving in the middle of the lake. In fact, it will regularly take food, obtained by diving, to the side to eat it. It once chased away a Moorhen that was feeding on moss on a fallen tree-trunk, and then promptly copied it, but gave up after only a few seconds.

When swimming, the head movement is more pronounced than that of a Coot, but less so than that of a Moorhen. The call is a strange combination of those of Moorhen and Coot.

G. FLOWER

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D. R. Moore has commented as follows: 'From the description and transparency, it is clear that the example described by G. Flower broadly resembles the Suffolk bird (pages 407-409) in both appearance and behaviour, but with three or more significant differences: (1) the frontal shield is much more distinct and colourful, (2) the reddish eye shows up well (nobody commented on the latter feature on the Suffolk bird), (3) it lacks the white inverted horseshoe marking on the undertail-coverts (so obvious on the Suffolk example). The photograph also suggests a faint white line along the lower edge of the folded wing, and the description suggests that the legs may have been yellower than those of the Suffolk bird. So far as I know, nobody heard the Suffolk individual call. Finally, I am amused by the name 'Coochen': Suffolk birders referred to our bird as the 'Moot'. EDS

Coots and other birds eating goose- and gull-droppings The note on Coots *Fulica atra* eating goose-droppings (*Brit. Birds* 73: 410) prompts the following. At Rostherne Mere, Cheshire, similar behaviour was first observed in September 1976, when up to six Coots were seen eating the droppings of Canada Geese *Branla canadensis* and of an accompanying Barnacle Goose *B. leucopsis*. At the time, it was surmised that this behaviour might have been induced by poor feeding conditions: grass, the Coots' principal food at Rostherne Mere, had been badly affected by a prolonged drought. Similar observations, however, were made in August 1977 and

August 1978. (Low water levels in August and September create good loafing conditions for the geese at the edge of the mere, where birds are readily observed; eating of goose-droppings at other times of the year might be overlooked.) Up to five Mallards *Anas platyrhynchos*, two Tufted Ducks *Aythya fuligula* and one Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* have also been seen eating Canada Goose droppings, and on a number of occasions Coots and Tufted Ducks have dived among Canada Geese swimming in deep water (searching for droppings passed by the geese?). On 28th January 1977, six Coots swimming among a flock of Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus* pecked at the water surface in a way that could have been compatible with the eating of the gulls' faeces. During severe weather in January 1982, up to 50 Coots were frequently seen eating droppings from Black-headed Gulls standing on the ice, and were also noted roaming ice where gulls (mainly Black-headed, but also Common *L. canus*, Lesser Black-backed *L. fuscus*, Herring *L. argentatus* and Great Black-backed *L. marinus*) had been roosting, pecking at frozen droppings; a Moorhen was twice observed feeding in the same way. At this time, however, I never saw Coots feeding off the many piles of Canada Goose-droppings on the ice.

TOM WALL

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Magpies eating dog faeces At about 06.30 GMT on 30th July 1980, two Magpies *Pica pica* flew down onto the lawn of my house at Guisborough, Cleveland, where there were some slightly dry dog faeces. They broke these into pieces, which they ate. This behaviour continued for a few minutes, and then the Magpies flew off together, one carrying the last large remaining piece in its bill. Derek Goodwin (1976, *Crows of the World*) mentioned mammal droppings being turned over in search of invertebrates, but not that the droppings are eaten; nor is this recorded in *The Handbook*.

D. SUMMERS-SMITH

Merlewood, The Avenue, Guisborough, Cleveland

Starlings eating dog faeces On 26th September 1979, on the front at Gunclyff Hill, Southwold, Suffolk, I saw four Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* pecking into and eating items from fresh dog faeces. They came deliberately to the excrement and remained for only about one minute before flying off, without being disturbed. They had probed into part of only two of the three stools, the rather shallow holes made revealing dry vegetable matter including cereal husks. These husks had probably been visible to the arriving Starlings on the surface of the stools, suggesting that the Starlings had not pecked into them at random.

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Dr C. H. Fry has commented that his dogs are fed on a mix largely of crushed and uncrushed cereal, the uncrushed passing through undigested: 'Blackbirds *Turdus merula*, Song Thrushes *T. philomelos* and Starlings all poke around in faeces. I think to take this animal-protein-enriched meal!' Derek Goodwin has added: 'This type of behaviour by birds could easily be overlooked. Gilbert White (*The Natural History of Selborne*) recorded Carrion Crows *Corvus corone* eating horse dung in hard weather, and Biddulph's Ground Jay *Podoces biddulphi* is also known to eat horse dung.' Eds

House Sparrows down underground station The paper on House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* down coal mines (*Brit. Birds* 73: 325-327) prompts the following. On 18th October 1980, on the underground Jubilee line at Euston Station, London, I heard and then saw two House Sparrows flying down the platform. One female appeared to have a perch or roost in a damaged neon-light fixture. The platform is 56 ft (17 m) below ground, and the Jubilee line nowhere goes above ground; presumably, the sparrows had descended three sets of escalators to reach the platform.

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House Sparrow taking insects from spiders' webs On 23rd September 1980, by the River Avon in Bath, Avon, I noticed a female House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* hovering alongside some nearby iron railings, just below the top horizontal bar. After a while, I realised that it was taking insects caught in the spiders' webs. A web straddled almost every pair of railings, and the sparrow worked systematically along them; while I watched, it must have covered seven or eight webs, sometimes trying one several times before moving on to the next.

KATE ROSSETTI

Orchard View, Holcombe Hill, Holcombe, near Bath, Avon BA3 5DL

Derek Goodwin has commented: 'House Sparrows in London habitually search in such places (see *Birds of Man's World*, page 51), but I have not positively seen them stealing from spiders' webs.' Eds

Nesting birds killed by storm In May 1980, at the Crescent Lake National Wildlife Refuge, western Nebraska, USA, there was a graphic illustration of the effects of a severe storm on nesting birds. The refuge lies in the Nebraska Sandhills country, which is subject to the periodic sudden storms characteristic of the weather of the Great Plains. In the mid afternoon of 29th May, one of these fierce storms occurred, with strong winds, thunder, lightning, torrential rain and localised hail. The rain continued for some hours, but the most violent part of the storm (including huge hailstones) passed through the refuge area in less than one hour. Its effects as observed in the refuge included a female Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors* and an Upland Plover *Bartramia longicauda* both apparently battered to death by the hailstones; two male Wilson's Phalaropes *Phalaropus tricolor* dead on nests, each containing four broken eggs; a complete clutch of nine eggs of an American Coot *Fulica americana* smashed by the hailstones; and a female Shore Lark *Eremophila alpestris* and four recently hatched young battered to death in the nest. In addition, the high winds partially shifted the nest of a Swainson's Hawk *Buteo swainsoni* 6-7 m up in a dead willow *Salix*, so that the three eggs fell to the ground. A few miles from the refuge, at least three nests of Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*, all containing eggs, were completely destroyed by flooding. The fate of all these nests was known because

each was under observation; the total mortality in the area must have been much greater.

BRYAN SAGE

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Although these observations were in North America and concern primarily Nearctic species, we feel that it is the unusually detailed evidence of storm damage which is of primary interest. Eds

Letters

The possibility of east Mediterranean Manx Shearwaters occurring in British waters Manx Shearwaters of the race *Puffinus p. mauretanicus*, known colloquially as the 'Balearic Shearwater', occur regularly off the English south coast during the summer months. There are, however, no accepted records of its Mediterranean congener *P. p. yelkouan* in British waters, although Grahame Walbridge (verbally) has informed me that he and others have seen birds resembling this race at Portland Bill, Dorset; this fact being borne out by the occasional mention in Portland Bird Observatory annual reports of 'possible' *P. p. yelkouan* offshore.

Whilst sea-watching at Portland on 21st June 1978, I saw one such bird and obtained the following description:

Size, structure, actions, and basic plumage pattern as accompanying Manx Shearwater <i>P. p. puffinus</i> . Whole upperside uniformly brown, rather paler than two <i>P. p. mauretanicus</i> seen later. Underside white, with	dusky suffusion on axillaries and under surfaces of remiges and rectrices. Sharp division between brown and white on side of head, lacking any white crescent behind ear-coverts.
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Thus, this bird fits closely the descriptions of *P. p. yelkouan* in the literature, although a caveat could be added concerning the possibility of exceptionally pale or faded adult or first-summer *P. p. mauretanicus* or *P. p. puffinus*, which would be paler than fresh juveniles. Further, the occasional occurrence of this race in the English Channel would seem possible, since *BWP* states that it disperses within the Mediterranean as far west as the Strait of Gibraltar, and there it must mingle with *P. p. mauretanicus*, some of which—perhaps non-breeders—move north to the English Channel.

MARTIN CADE

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We publish Martin Cade's letter not as an authenticated record of *P. p. yelkouan* but to draw seawatchers' attentions to this race and the possibility of its occurrence in British and Irish waters. Indeed it has been suspected on previous occasions (e.g. *Brit. Birds* 45: 41-55; 46: 285-296; *Cornwall Birdwatching and Preservation Society Ann. Rep.* 1958: 42; 1973: 53). Eds

Polygamy and double-brooding of Willow Warbler Da Prato (1982) discussed polygamy and double-brooding of Willow Warblers *Phylloscopus trochilus* in southeast Scotland. I am able to comment further on both subjects, using data from my own studies, on colour-ringed individuals, at Witley Common, Surrey, during 1976-82.

Before my first record (Lawn 1978), single cases of bigamy by Willow Warblers were reported by Howard (1907-14) and Trahair Hartley (1934).

In 1977-82, 18 (about 13%) of my 136 territorial males were bigamous, the most in any one year being seven (25%) out of 28 (in 1982). I have discussed bigamy and territorial behaviour elsewhere (Lawn 1982), and several cases of bigamy have also been recorded among Willow Warblers in southern Finland (Tiainen 1982, 1983; Tiainen, Hanski & Mehtälä unpublished). Bigamy is clearly not unusual among Willow Warblers, but da Prato's record of trigamy appears to be unique.

I do not agree with da Prato that the occurrence of polygamy would influence estimates of double-brooding to any appreciable extent; the nesting attempts of most females mated to bigamous males overlap so much (Lawn 1982) that they could not be mistaken for second broods of single pairs. The third mate (G) of da Prato's polygamous male in 1981, however, nested late enough to have been confused with either one of the male's two previous females attempting a replacement clutch; but she had already raised one brood, supposedly with a different male outside the study area. I am unhappy with da Prato's records concerning this female. If her fledglings were near independence when seen in the study area on 11th June, she must have already started incubation when she was seen there between 9th and 11th May (allowing 13 days each for incubation and fledging, plus egg-laying and post-fledging periods). It seems more likely that the first brood of this female was also fathered by the polygamous male, but that the female's presence there was overlooked until after the young had fledged. In any case, time obviously did not prevent this female from double-brooding.

Estimates of the frequency of double-brooding are not easy to obtain. There may, in fact, be no clear distinction between genuine second broods and replacements for earlier failures. Fledging of at least some of the young is the usual criterion for a successful nest. If the young die shortly after fledging, the adults may make a second attempt; if they survive to independence, however, time may not permit a second brood. When part of a brood is lost before fledging, male Willow Warblers sometimes care for the survivors on their own: leaving the female free to start a second clutch immediately, a time-saving of 10-12 days (the time taken for fledglings to reach independence). I know of three such cases at Witley Common, the most extreme of which involved a female that started laying a second clutch only five or six days after the young had fledged from the first nest. In my experience, however, when all (six or seven) young of a normal-sized brood fledge, both parents usually care for them until they reach independence. Second broods are, therefore, probably more frequent after partial losses of first broods.

I agree with da Prato that time limits the frequency of double-brooding (especially in Scotland, where the breeding season is shorter than in southern England), but I would certainly not dismiss earlier references to higher proportions of second broods than he or I found. I have already shown (Lawn 1980) that my study population has been arriving later than May's (1949) did during the 1940s: my first egg-dates averaged about ten days later than May's. Later arrivals in recent years may greatly influence the frequency of double-brooding. The earlier studies of Brock (1910),

however, clearly indicate that double-brooding is possible in Scotland, even though Brock's first egg-dates averaged a little later than da Prato's.

Although double-brooding may now be less frequent than it once was, owing to later arrival times, there are several time-saving factors which allow some late broods. In addition to male care of fledglings, late clutches are smaller, incubation may commence before the clutch is complete, and the young may develop faster than in earlier broods (personal observations). Also of importance is overlap between breeding and moult. This is not unusual for Willow Warblers with late broods, whether these be replacements for earlier failures or genuine second broods. I have four records of Willow Warblers trapped, while in active moult, which were known to be rearing late broods. My sight records include one of a male, tail-less and with about half of its primaries missing or growing, feeding nestlings on 18th July 1979. In southern Finland, Tiainen (1981) found much individual variation, but considerable overlap between breeding and moult. Suspended moult has also been recorded in Willow Warblers with late broods (Ginn & Melville 1983).

I do not support da Prato's speculative interpretation that polygamy allows Willow Warblers to increase reproductive output without adversely affecting moult or migration. He implied that females may actually select already-mated males. This is true of several species in which polygamy is well developed (e.g. Orians 1980, Verner 1964). The system in the Willow Warbler (Lawn 1982), however, is such that the second female is probably usually unaware of the first until she is already committed to breeding with the male. Any 'choice' made by females, involving male or territory quality, will be made in ignorance of the male's marital status. Males, therefore, may 'cheat' females so as to increase their own reproductive output at the latter's expense (e.g. Alatalo *et al.* 1981, 1982; Dawkins 1976). This male strategy would be advantageous only in those species in which the female can raise at least some of the young with little or no help from the male. I have shown this to be so in the case of the Willow Warbler (Lawn 1982), but this could be dependent on habitat. Further studies are required on the extent of polygamy in relation to habitat and range.

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The Spurn Tengmalm's Owl The discovery of a Tengmalm's Owl *Aegolius funereus* on Spurn Nature Reserve, Humberside, on 6th March 1983, and the Yorkshire Naturalists' Trust's subsequent decision to keep its presence secret, has generated considerable debate and on occasions somewhat hostile comment. When the owl was discovered it was immediately obvious that a potential multitude of people would wish to see it. Its roost, however, was close to vital coastal services (lifeboat houses, coastguard and Humber Pilots facilities, an area closed to the public), and at the time Spurn was in its most precarious condition since 1960. February storms had seriously eroded the northern end of the peninsula, all but breaking through a flood bank, and high spring tides were expected in March which could have severed the peninsula. Throughout March, emergency works were undertaken to create further reinforcements against the sea, operations involving heavy cranes, bulldozers and lorries, working in a confined space; the sea of mud created was another problem. These works had to be carried out with the utmost urgency, since the implications of a breach of the peninsula are very serious: at the least isolating the lifeboat crew, pilots and coastguard, cutting off their water, telephones and electricity; at the worst affecting, to an uncertain extent, surrounding low-lying land and the patterns of silt deposition in the Humber estuary and shipping lanes.

During March, through the national media, the YNT was warning of the seriousness of the situation. It would, therefore, have been wholly irresponsible to have encouraged large numbers on to the reserve, particularly considering that emergency provisions for the evacuation of the warden in times of high risk had also been implemented for this period. The last thing the Trust could have coped with was the control of large numbers of people. All our efforts were involved in securing, for the short term, the future of the reserve and the ability of the coastal and emergency services to continue to function, a primary responsibility being to protect the interests of our tenants, especially the families of the lifeboat crew.

The owl was last seen on 27th March. When its visit later became known, almost immediately a birdwatcher or birdwatchers crept down the peninsula at about 04.00 hours with a tape recorder. This is clearly not the kind of behaviour that the Trust can condone on its reserves, particularly near people's homes in one of the most remote locations in the country.

The decision to keep the owl's presence secret was not an act of elitism, as

some have suggested, but was taken for the most extreme of practical reasons. Although I was a party to it, the ultimate decision was taken by the Executive Officer and by the President of the Trust, neither of whom knew the name of the species, merely the circumstances.

Against this background, I hope that those who have felt aggrieved can now reflect in full knowledge on the impossible position that the Trust faced. The desire to enjoy birds must in some circumstances be tempered with reason and responsibility, not least ensuring that the bird itself is protected; it must also be accepted that there is no right for anybody to demand to be informed of the presence of rare species. In the final analysis, the numbers of comments and letters of support, and even donations from the public at large, individual birdwatchers and ornithological clubs, far outweigh the complaints. The Trust has greatly appreciated this positive reflection of the attitudes of birdwatchers in general, which makes it abundantly clear that the vast majority are reasonable and responsible, even in their personal disappointment.

IAN CARSTAIRS

Hon. Public Relations Officer and Council Member, The Yorkshire Naturalists' Trust, 20 Castlegate, York YO1 1RP

There are some occasions when—for any of a variety of reasons—occurrences of rare birds need to be suppressed. We fully support the actions of the YNT in this case. We publish the reasons here to cool the somewhat heated reactions of a minority of observers who failed to appreciate that secrecy was justified. We hope that future instances will not be judged until the full facts are established. Eds

Rarities Committee news and announcements

P. J. Grant and the Rarities Committee

This year's annual meeting was held at Blunham, Bedfordshire, on 12th March. As there were no further nominations for Committee membership (*Brit. Birds* 75: 337), Peter G. Lansdown started his term on 1st April 1983, taking the voting place of Dr J. T. R. Sharrock who has left the Committee after serving for 14 years but who will still be closely involved in an advisory capacity. A further constitutional change was that in future the Committee will have an annual opportunity to vote to change its Chairman, the appointment of any successful nominee being subject to approval by the Editorial Board.

Election of new member

Nominations are invited to fill the next vacancy, which will arise on or before 31st March 1984. They should be sent to me by 31st December 1983. The Committee's nomination is Alan R. Dean, who is very experienced at record-vetting at local level and has made various contributions on

identification subjects to this journal, notably on Isabelline *Lanius isabellinus* and Brown Shrikes *L. cristatus* (*Brit. Birds* 75: 395-406).

Observers' names in rarities report

G. P. Sutton's proposal (*Brit. Birds* 76: 93) that the names of rarity finders and describers should be dropped from the Committee's annual report prompted replies from 49 readers: 21 in favour and 28 against; we thank all those who responded. After discussion, the Committee unanimously agreed to retain names, mainly as an acknowledgment of the contributors' efforts in supplying often lengthy descriptions (in the same way that authors of other contributions to *British Birds* are acknowledged), but also because there was no evidence that the publication of names had harmfully affected birdwatching attitudes in any significant way.

P. J. Grant, 14 Heathfield Road, Ashford, Kent TN24 8QD

Announcements

'The Big Bird Race' You heard about it on the grapevine, you read about it in the newspapers, you saw last year's one on television, now you can buy the book!

The accounts of the 'Country Life' *versus* Fauna & Flora Preservation Society 24-hour sponsored birdwatch challenge, written by David Tomlinson ('CL') and Bill Oddie (FFPS), will be published by Collins in paperback at £3.95 on 31st October. Maps of their routes are shown, and Laurel Tucker's drawings enliven the hour-by-hour accounts. This book can be ordered now through British BirdShop (page ix).

'Tunncliffe's Birds: measured drawings in colour by C. F. Tunncliffe' This new 335 × 250 mm, 160-page book includes some 80 of C. F. Tunncliffe's measured drawings reproduced in colour, with an accompanying text by Dr Noel Cusa. It will be published by Victor Gollancz Ltd (publisher of those previous superb Tunncliffe classics) on 13th October. *BB* readers who order now from British BirdShop (see page ix) will receive their copies post free (in UK & Eire); the books will be despatched as soon as they are available, which it is hoped will be during September.

'Best Days of Birdwatching' The closing date for the submission of entries (1,500 to 2,000-word typescripts on your best day of birdwatching in Britain or Ireland: see full details in *Brit. Birds* 76: 281-282) has been extended from 15th August 1983 to 10th December 1983. Entries should be addressed to Stuart Winter, c/o Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

News and comment

Robin Prytherch and Mike Everett

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

Doñana developments The Marismas of the Guadalquivir is one of Europe's greatest wetlands, familiar to British ornithologists through Guy Mountfort's *Portrait of a Wilderness* (1958). In the early 1960s, an international appeal enabled the World Wildlife Fund to purchase and present to the Spanish authorities a considerable area of the Coto Doñana. In the 1970s, the Government incorporated further areas of beach, dune, scrub forest and marsh into the Doñana National Park. Meanwhile, however, immediately north of the Park, the official irrigation and drainage board was busy cutting off two of the three streams which supplied the marshes with water. In recent years, Spanish conservationists have been fighting to reverse the effects of this two-thirds reduction in water supplies (compounded, incidentally, by a four-year drought). Finally, last May, the special Conservation Committee of the Government Interministerial Commission on the Environment formally adopted the 'Centre-North Solution' which will re-open the Guadiamar (one of the channels closed) and guarantee adequate water supplies.

This must be the European conservation event of the decade. The Spanish Government is to be warmly congratulated on this far-sighted ecological decision. Ornithologists and conservationists the world over will be following the progress of restoration work. May other governments follow suit! (*Contributed by Mike Smart*)

Two new species for the western Palearctic? After study of the Cape Verde and Madeiran birds which are usually regarded as races of the Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis*, Dr W. R. P. Bourne has recently advocated (*Bull. BOC* 103: 52-58) that they be regarded as two separate species, the Gon-gon *P. feae* and the Freira *P. madeira*, with *P. mollis* restricted to the (very distinct) birds of southern oceans.

The English names chosen by Dr Bourne (Gon-gon and Freira) seem surprising when he always objects so strongly to the use of 'Leach's Petrel' and 'Storm Petrel' for what he would prefer to have called 'Leach's Storm-petrel' and 'British Storm-petrel'.

Whatever their common names, however, let us hope that Dr Bourne's initiative encourages the study and conservation of the tiny, decreasing and vulnerable populations of these very interesting petrels. The Freira *Pterodroma (mollis) madeira*, indeed, is considered to be down to 'a few dozen pairs'. (*Contributed by JTRS*)

Record Birdwatch Good planning was, according to David Tomlinson of *Country Life*, the key to his team's third victory over the Fauna and Flora Preservation Society on 14th May, briefly noted last month (*Brit. Birds* 76: 362). Wader numbers were very low, and neither team recorded Ruff, Knot or Golden Plover. While the *Country Life* score, at 155, was two more than last year, and a new record for a sponsored birdwatch, the FFPS's total was six down on 1982. Through sponsorship, however, more than £6,000 was raised for a variety of wildlife charities. A blow-by-blow (or, according to the blurb, crow-by-crow) account of the day is recorded in *The Big Bird Race*, written by Bill Oddie and David Tomlinson, and available post free through British BirdShop (see page ix) at £3.95, with some of the royalties going to the RSPB, the Wildfowl Trust and the FFPS.

Welcome to the club, Rob! Congratulations are due to Rob Hume on his recent appointment as Editor of *Bird Life*, the magazine of the Young Ornithologists' Club; we wish him a long and enjoyable editorship.

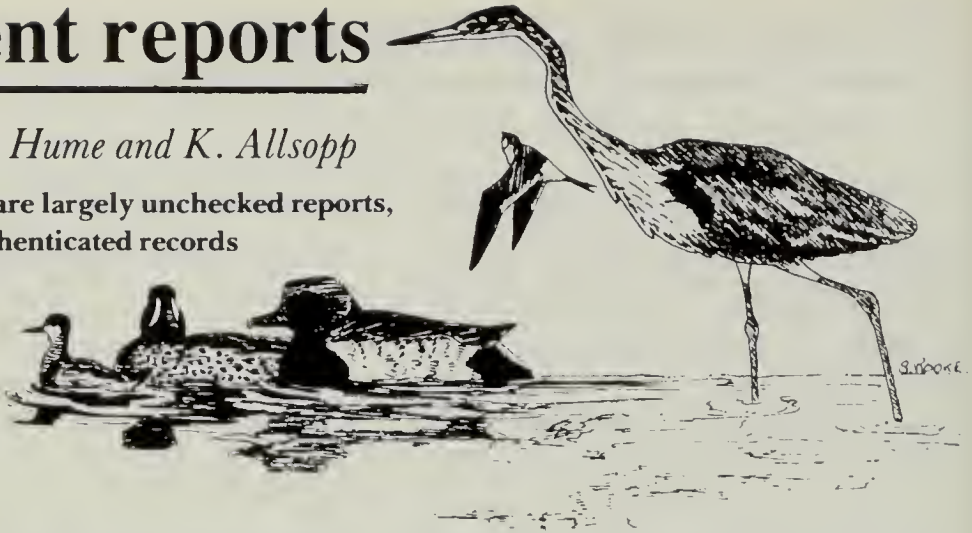
Good luck, Alastair! After 14 years as its industrious, efficient and ever-helpful Secretary, Major Alastair Peirse-Duncombe is leaving the Scottish Ornithologists' Club this autumn. We send him, and his wife Daphne, best wishes in their retirement.

Arrested birders home from Turkey The return to England on 27th July of Simon Albrecht and Dennis Buisson, after their arrest, imprisonment and detention on bail in Turkey (*Brit. Birds* 76: 321, 360), was featured prominently on television news. Lessons to be learned by other birders planning foreign trips will be discussed in a future *BB*.

Recent reports

R. A. Hume and K. Allsopp

**These are largely unchecked reports,
not authenticated records**



Dates given in this report refer to June unless stated differently.

The weather during the first half of the month was unsettled and cold, with frequent rain: the air originated from more northerly latitudes. A more settled anticyclonic period started on 15th, with the high pressure centred close to the British Isles, but persistent cloud cover kept temperatures below normal. A further unsettled spell returned, as the centre of pressure moved west, and cool northerly air arrived after 23rd.

Another first . . .

Pride of place without a doubt must go to a beautiful, if briefly seen, male **White-throated Robin** *Irania gutturalis* on the Calf of Man on 22nd. A migrant from the southeast into Turkey, it might perhaps be expected to overshoot once in a while. Indeed, it was predicted by Wallace (*Brit. Birds* 73: 390), and one reached Sweden in 1977. Nevertheless, few people could really have expected it to appear here, especially so far west.

. . . and a fourth

Hardly less deserving of banner headlines was a **Needle-tailed Swift** *Hirundapus caudacutus* on South Ronaldsay (Orkney) on 11th and 12th. The lucky reporter described it as the most exciting bird he had seen for years, and ran out of superlatives. There was one over Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork) in June 1964 and two earlier records, both in July, in Essex (1846) and Hampshire (1879). Most of us can only imagine, and dream of, how this bird must look, hurtling about the sky.

Southern vagrants

Golden Orioles *Oriolus oriolus* were noted in Orkney on 5th, 8th and 21st, on Fair Isle

(Shetland) from 13th to 15th, and at Beachy Head (East Sussex) on 27th, as well as at their beleaguered breeding sites. **Bee-eaters** *Merops apiaster*, after a terrific May, still kept on occurring, with seven at Stanton St John (Oxfordshire) on 3rd, eating someone's bees over a hive, one at Spurn Point (Humber-side) on 8th, and four at Beachy Head from 26th to 28th. A **Roller** *Coracias garrulus* was found at West Tofts (Norfolk) on 11th and 12th. Portland (Dorset) claimed a **Red-rumped Swallow** *Hirundo daurica* on 26th. Rarer still, a **Pallid Swift** *Apus pallidus* was reported from Farlington Marsh (Hampshire) on 20th May. On Fair Isle, there was a **Subalpine Warbler** *Sylvia cantillans* from 13th to 15th, and **Serins** *Serinus serinus* were at Stanpit Marsh (Dorset) on 4th and on Dartmoor (Devon) on 18th.

A **Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax* was in the Cotswold Water Park (Wiltshire) on 17th, and one was reported from the Ouse Washes (Cambridgeshire) on 29th. The latter locality also had a **Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea* during the latter part of the month, as well as a **Collared Pratincole** *Glareola pratincola* which attracted many people despite a relative surfeit of them this spring. Another was at Staines (Surrey) on 19th and one was at Sandwich Bay (Kent) at the end of the month. Additional **Purple Herons** were at Minsmere (Suffolk): one on 4th and two on 10th. Staines also had a **Kentish Plover** *Charadrius alexandrinus* on 12th, the fourth of the spring there. **Whiskered Terns** *Chlidonias hybridus* also overshoot, reaching Castle Howard Lake (North Yorkshire) on 4th and Blackpool (Lancashire) on 9th and 10th.

Birds from the east

A **Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus* reached Orkney on 13th. A **Honey Buzzard**

Pernis apivorus was found dead on Filey Brigg (North Humberside) on 4th, and one was on the Isle of May (Fife) on 9th. **Cranes** *Grus grus* were on Fair Isle on 22nd May and in Orkney from 20th onwards. A **Red-flanked Bluetail** *Tarsiger cyanurus* caused excitement on the Isle of May from 24th to 25th May: one of those never-got-to-grips-with vagrants which everyone would like to discover. **Bluethroats** *Luscinia svecica* included three on

Hoy (Orkney) on 6th. A **Rose-coloured Starling** *Sturnus roseus* reached the Isle of May on 2nd. **Yellow Wagtails** *Motacilla flava* included birds showing characteristics of the Scandinavian race *thunbergi* on Fair Isle, with two on 1st and one from 2nd to 7th, and of the Italian race *cinereocapilla* at Filey Brigg on 2nd and 3rd and at Bondicarr (Northumberland) on 22nd May.

Wildfowl and waders

The famous **Steller's Eider** *Polysticta stelleri* remained all month on South Uist (Western Isles) (plate 171). Two **American Wigeons** *Anas americana* settled briefly on Unst (Shetland) on 4th. The favoured Ouse Washes, where birders could see up to five good rarities in a day at one stage, had a male **Red-crested Pochard** *Netta rufina*, a **Blue-winged Teal** *A. discors* from 22nd, and also, for a period late in the month, a **Red-necked Phalarope** *Phalaropus lobatus*; this last species also occurred at Staines on 3rd and 4th. The Nearctic **Wilson's Phalarope** *P. tricolor* put in a welcome appearance at Blacktoft Sands (Humberside) on 2nd and 3rd, at Minsmere on 6th and 7th, and at Titchwell (Norfolk) on 23rd, three RSPB reserves which regularly attract rare birds. The latest two of this spring's **Broad-billed Sandpipers** *Limicola falcinellus* were at Aberlady Bay (Lothian) (plates 169 & 170).

Finally, strange records deserving a mention are a **Manx Shearwater** *Puffinus puffinus* far inland on a most unusual date, at Tilehouse Gravel-pit (Buckinghamshire) on 7th, and the **Eagle Owl** *Bubo bubo* which was well-watched by many at Whetsted, near Tonbridge (Kent) (plate 168).

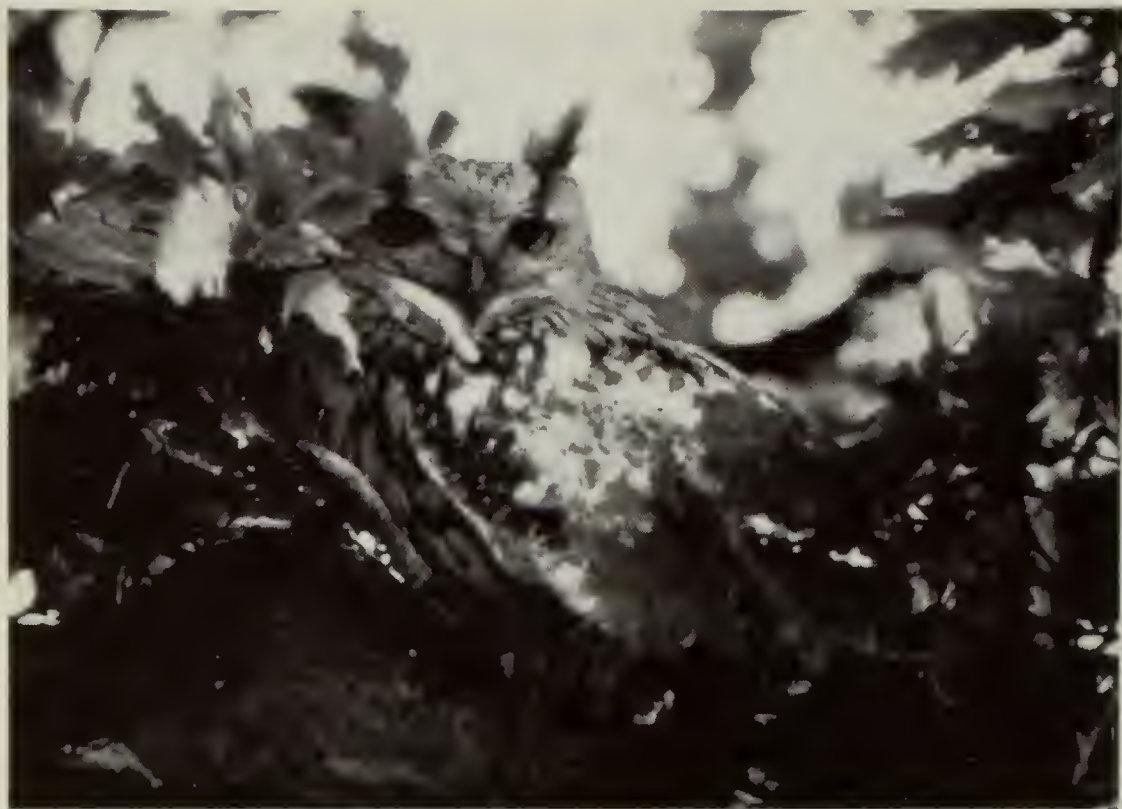
Recent rarities decisions

The **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* in the Whitstable/Reculver area (Kent) in October 1981 is considered to have escaped from captivity. A record of an immature **White-tailed Eagle** *Haliaeetus albicilla* at Spurn (Humberside) in March 1982 has been accepted as almost certainly the same individual as that at Thorne Moors (Humberside) in February and March 1982. The record of **Lark Sparrow** *Chondestes grammacus* at Landguard Point (Suffolk) in June and July 1981 has been reconsidered, but remains in Category D of the British and Irish list. Finally, **Ring-necked Parakeet** *Psittacula krameri* has been accepted into Category C of the British and Irish list, to join other established introductions such as Little Owl *Athene noctua* and Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa*. (Compiled by P. G. Lansdown)

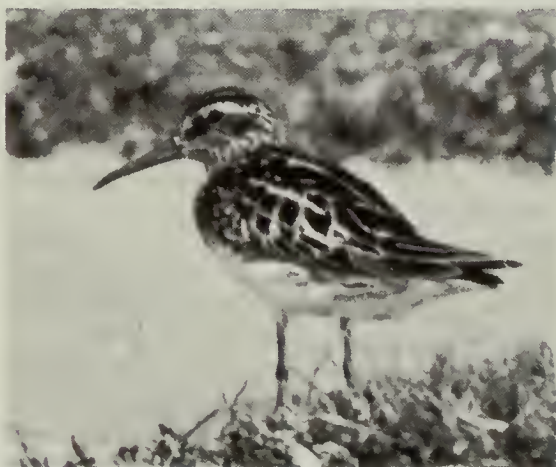


Fair Isle on 1st and one at Winterton (Norfolk) on 25th, after two on the Isle of May on 25th May. **Marsh Warblers** *Acrocephalus palustris* made something of an influx, with at least nine (up to five at a time) on Fair Isle from 3rd to 27th, and singles on South Ronaldsay on 1st, on North Ronaldsay (Orkney) on 9th, on the Isle of May on 4th, at Sumburgh (Shetland) on 8th, and more southerly ones at Spurn Point on 1st and 2nd, and Bradwell (Essex) on 5th. **Greenish Warblers** *Phylloscopus trochiloides* were found on the Mull of Kintyre (Strathclyde) on 25th May and at Bradwell on 2nd. Dungeness (Kent) had an **Icterine Warbler** *Hippolais icterina* on 1st and a **Scarlet Rosefinch** *Carpodacus erythrinus* on 4th; the latter species was also noted on Fair Isle (one from 31st May to 30th and another on 13th), and on





168. Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo*, Kent, June 1983 (Royston K. Coles)



169 & 170. Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus*, Lothian, June 1983 (P. Wheeler)





171. Male Stellar's Eider *Polysticta stelleri*, Western Isles, May/June 1983
(David M. Coltridge)

Latest news

In first half of August, Norfolk records included **Royal Tern** *Sterna maxima* identified at Blakeney Point, **Greenish Warbler** found at Waxham, and several **Long-tailed Skuas** *Stercorarius longicaudus* along north coast.

Elsewhere, Portland had **Barred** *Sylvia nisoria*, **Melodious** *Hippolais polyglotta* and **Icterine Warblers** on same day; **Subalpine Warbler** in Shetland.

Short reviews

Looking After Cage Birds: keep and care. By David Alderton. (Ward Lock, 1982. £6.95) E.g. budgies. **Birds of Britain and Europe.** By Neil Ardley. (Kingfisher Books, 1983. Paperback, £1.95) Oh dear! When will Kingfisher Books learn? The illustrations have the appearance of painted wooden carvings and many (all?) have been used previously in other Kingfisher books. The drawing of 'the parts of a bird' labels such helpful things as 'feet', 'legs' and 'side', but omits many of the parts of a bird's topography and feather tracts. The maps showing European distribution are frequently inaccurate. The trouble is, the book does not *look* as bad as it is, so is liable to be bought by those who cannot yet discriminate: beginners, the very people who need an accurate guide. **Eco-ornithological Glossary. German-English, English-German.** By Rudolf Berndt and Wolfgang Winkel. (Duncker & Humblot, 1983. DM30.00) A most commendable publication, easy to use, giving up-to-date German and English equivalents, and definitions, of eco-ornithological terms. Extremely useful

for researchers, and for writers of scientific papers who wish to reduce the time taken in laborious perusal of references; indispensable to translators. [DAC] **Die Seeadler.** By Wolfgang Fischer. (Die Neue Brehm-Bücherei 221. A. Ziemsen Verlag, 1982. DM16.90) This is the latest in a series of over 550 monographs—the majority dealing with birds—that have been produced by these East German publishers. As usual, very reasonably priced, aided by the fairly cheap paper and soft covers, and wholly in German. This monograph is packed full of detailed biological information on the eight species in the genus *Haliaeetus*, but concentrating particularly on the White-tailed Eagle *H. albicilla* (nearly 70 of the 190 pages); there are 32 pages of photographs. [R. F. PORTER] **Himalayan Solo.** By Elizabeth Forster. (Anthony Nelson, Shrewsbury, 1982. £9.75) This is an interesting account of Elizabeth Forster's trekking excursions in the Himalayas of Nepal. She vividly describes the varied birdlife she encounters on her travels, including many of the common species one is likely to see. She also portrays

the dramatic beauty of the Himalayas and the charm of the Nepalese people. The book is enlivened with numerous anecdotes of her experiences. One can only admire her indomitable character and determination: during the last ten years she has made seven solo trips in the country and, at 73, is still returning for more. [CAROL INSKIPP]

Limicoles, Gangas et Pigeons d'Europe.

By Paul Géroudet. (Delachaux et Niestlé, 1982. No price given) The first of two volumes in French on European waders, sandgrouse and pigeons, this one covers waders up to Ruff, with 16 attractive colour plates by Paul Barruel. Some valuable introductory sections, particularly on footprints, are followed by detailed individual species texts under identification, voice, behaviour, food, habitat, breeding, migration and wintering, distribution (the rarest species treated more briefly, with the emphasis on identification). The 39 black-and-white photos include some helpful and unusual shots, and many of the 31 drawings are decidedly useful. The refreshingly personal style of writing is crammed with facts and with the author's own accurate observations. A few niggling errors (e.g., the type on p. 192 is in the wrong order), but altogether an exceptionally readable and instructive work. [DAC]

Birds That Came Back. **By John Gooders.**

(André Deutsch, 1983. £12.95). The meat of this 180-page, well illustrated book are the accounts of 41 species which have recently started to breed in Britain (e.g. Goldeneye, Collared Dove and Firecrest), returned to breed after an absence (e.g. Osprey, Avocet and Black-tailed Godwit), effectively been saved from extinction (e.g. Red Kite), or whose breeding was a 'one-off' event (e.g. Bee-eater and the controversial Cambridgeshire Moustached Warbler). At the two ends of this spectrum are chapters on birds which have disappeared as breeders (e.g. Crane and Spoonbill), and those expected in the future (e.g. Fan-tailed Warbler). There are interesting and useful introductory chapters on past human pressures on birds, and the history of bird protection. [R. F. PORTER]

Gardening with Wildlife. **Edited by Nicholas Hammond.**

(RSPB, 1982. Free to new members of the RSPB, otherwise £4.25 (incl. p&p) from the RSPB) Reproduction of the numerous colour-photographs is magnificent; the text is excellent and this 64-page, well-designed booklet will undoubtedly be effective in encouraging the development of gardens for the benefit of wildlife. **Wildlife of Scotland.**

Edited by Fred Holliday. (Macmillan, 1983. Paperback, £4.95) This splendid book is now available as a paperback. Previously reviewed (*Brit. Birds* 73: 272): 'beautifully produced, well-designed . . . Any naturalist with the slightest interest in the animals and plants of Scotland will want to own this book'. **Animaux Menacés en Wallonie.**

Protégeons Nos Oiseaux. **By Jean-Paul Ledant, Jean-Paul Jacob and Pierre Devillers.** (Editions J. Duculot, Paris-Gembloux, 1983. Paperback, no price given)

A report, in French, of the 88 bird species under any kind of threat in the Walloon region of southern Belgium. Part 1 consists of a species-by-species analysis (maps of breeding ranges in the West Palearctic and in Walloon, distribution in Walloon, habitat, evolution of current status, risk factors, and conservation measures); much useful information, particularly on habitat requirements. Part 2 gives the causes for species becoming rare—an excellent detailed account in a wider context and well worth reading. Part 3 outlines remedies for conserving species. There are 40 decorative, but superb, colour photos, and 32½ pages of bibliography indicate the depth of investigation which has resulted in this well-produced book. [DAC]

The Dictionary of Aviculture: keeping and breeding birds.

By Richard Mark Martin. (Batsford, 1983. £7.95) This is an illustrated encyclopaedia, rather than a dictionary; 228 pages. **Flights of Imagination: an illustrated anthology of bird poetry.**

Compiled by Mike Mockler. (Blandford Press, 1982. £7.95)

A selection of poems by a variety of poets, including John Clare, C. Day Lewis, Lord Tennyson and R. S. Thomas, with no less than nine poems by Norman MacCaig and one by the compiler himself. Any anthology must represent the personal choice of its compiler, but I must admit to a personal wish that this selection had been more representative: there is such a wide choice of excellent British wildlife poets from which to choose. The book is illustrated in a lively fashion by 18 different artists. **Bird-watcher's Yearbook 1983.** **Edited by John E. Pemberton.** (Buckingham Press, 1982. Paperback, £6.50) This, the third annual 'Yearbook', the brainchild of its compiler/publisher, John E. Pemberton, is unfortunately already out of print before this review is published. Like its predecessors, it is a very useful source of reference for every birdwatcher, and essential for the professional ornithologist: how did we manage

before the series started? The success of the first three has, luckily, ensured that we shall have a fourth. **Seevögel—Opfer der Ölpest.** By Bettina Reineking and Gottfried Vauk. (Niederelbe-Verlag Otterndorf, 1982. Paperback, DM21.50) A 143-page review of oiling incidents and the effects of oil on birds, illustrated with many maps, diagrams, tables and photographs, but wholly in German. Most of the examples relate to the North Sea area. The ten-page list of references will be especially useful to anyone not familiar with the German literature. [C. J. MEAD] **Der Fitislaubsänger.** By Manfred Schönfeld. (Die Neue Brehm-Bücherei 539, Ziemsen Verlag, 1982. DM22.50). The tiny Willow Warbler has earned itself one of the largest monographs in this excellent series: no less than 184 pages. As usual, it has a scholarly text with a long bibliography (though apparently there is no reference to a relevant British paper, based on Nest Record Cards, on breeding biology), together with important data and photographs from the author's own studies at the nest. [SC] **The Birdwatcher's Calendar.** By Bob Scott. (Ebury Press, 1982. £8.95) This is not a book for identification. Instead, 224 birds are put into a month when they are supposedly most interesting to observe. The book also covers subjects such as bird biology, evolution, habits, and annual cycles. The idea is good, but difficult to do well, as most birds are interesting in more than one month. In some cases, I consider that birds have been placed in the wrong month. The pictures are generally good, but even when the sexes differ only one is shown, and this is not made clear. [KATHERINE YATES] **Discovering Birds: a practical guide to birdcraft.** By Tony Soper. (BBC, 1983. Paperback, £3.50) This book was produced by the BBC to accompany its Continuing Education television series 'Discovering birds' shown on BBC 2 in spring 1983. It is aimed more at the kitchen-window or sitting-room window birdwatcher

than at the budding birder, as shown by the main chapter headings of 'Bird gardening', 'Birds and bird tables', 'Birding from the kitchen window', 'Nests, nesting places and birds in boxes', 'Bathing and drinking' and 'Working for birds'. These topics are covered very competently and the book will, surely, be very helpful for its intended audience. There are over 100 drawings, mostly by Kevin Baker. The chapter setting out some of the history of the provision of artificial nest-sites for birds is full of interest and included a lot of information which was new to this reviewer. Tony Soper praises Ian Wallace's *Discover Birds* (1979) in his Introduction; they are written for two different sets of readers, so complement rather than compete. **Birds of Latvia: territorial distribution and number.** Edited by J. Viksne. (Zinātne, 1983. No price given) A total of 18 pages of this 224-page book is in Roman script, and in English. This section is devoted to a systematic list of all the species recorded in the Latvian SSR, coded according to whether they are nesting species, bred in the 18th and 19th centuries, are regular or irregular migrants, or are accidental. The short summaries of one to ten lines give localities, census results and so on, providing an excellent handy source of information. **Climatological Maps of Great Britain.** By E. J. White and R. I. Smith. (Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, 1982. Paperback, £2.00) A 32-page booklet with 23 maps showing distribution in Britain (by 10-km squares) of six ranges of mean air temperature, mean rainfall, mean visibility, mean duration of bright sunshine, mean wind speed, and mean total snow depths, for various three-month periods. The data are displayed by six different degrees of shading, providing excellent immediate visual impact and also easy determination of the figure for any individual 10-km square.

Also received: *Pigeon Racing* by Wilson Stephens (Ward Lock, 1983. £6.95)

JTRS

Reviews

British Garden Birds. Video-cassette presented by David Attenborough. BBC Enterprises Ltd, 1981. Duration 72 minutes.

The idea of having a simple identification guide to British garden birds which can be viewed at home on the television screen (by those fortunate enough also to have a video recorder) is excellent, and so too is this particular tape. The commentary, by David Attenborough, covers not only identification, but also general information about the species being shown. The

sequence is 'field guide order', so that related species follow each other. The selection is comprehensive and in the 70 minutes the viewer sees and hears about all the species which are likely to be seen in an English garden (although some, such as Mute Swan, Hobby, Wryneck, Nightingale and Crossbill, are likely to occur in only a few!).

It seems almost unfair to introduce words of adverse criticism, but it seemed strange that Willow Tit should not even be mentioned when Marsh Tit is one of the featured species; and also odd that, despite the inclusion of Whitethroat, Blackcap, Willow Warbler and Chiffchaff, there is no mention of Garden Warbler, when its name alone should have guaranteed its inclusion on this particular tape. The colour quality of the review tape was disappointing, but I suspect that this was the result of excessive use and that a newly purchased copy would be of the BBC's usual high standard.

The value of this video tape lies not only in its use for audiences of small clubs, but also for home use by people who are not yet thoroughly familiar with the common birds of the English countryside. (Perhaps, in a few years' time, we shall have videotapes of those obscure Asiatic warblers and buntings . . .)

J. T. R. SHARROCK

Atlas Provisional de los Vertebrados Terrestres de Galicia Años 1970-1979. Parte II. Aves nidificantes. Edited by Z. Lopez Beiras and J. Guitán Rivera. Santiago de Compostela, 1980 (Monograph No. 74 of the University of Santiago de Compostela). 176 pages; 150 maps. Paperback, 1,200 ptas.

This atlas gives provisional breeding distribution maps for 148 bird species in Galicia, the northwest region of Spain, based on some 5,300 records covering 257 10-km squares of the UTM grid, a little under three-quarters of the area. About half the records, and half the area cover, came from published and unpublished studies in 1970-78, and the rest from fieldwork in 1979 by a few individuals using the methods of the BTO/IWC atlas. Both atlas and fieldwork were in preparation for a project to map the terrestrial vertebrates of Galicia during 1980-85. Maps, usually two to a page, use the familiar three dot sizes for possible, probable and confirmed breeding, and are faced by a brief commentary summarising distribution and giving status as very common, common, less common, rare, or very rare. The last two have 29 species each, and six and 20 respectively are considered endangered—unlikely to survive more than a few years without urgent protection. A further 20 species are mentioned, which formerly bred; or whose claims are doubtful; or which breed elsewhere in Iberia and are common on migration.

By its nature far from complete, this atlas nevertheless shows that, even with few observers to cover a diverse area 50% bigger than Wales, much of interest can be learned. It should have served well its purpose of guiding the main survey, which will in turn help Spanish ornithologists with their share of the forthcoming European breeding bird atlas project during 1985-88.

S. M. TAYLOR

Les Oiseaux de la Corse: histoire et répartition aux XIXe et XXe Siècles. By Jean-Claude Thibault. Parc Naturel Regional de la Corse, Ajaccio. (Available from Redwing Books, 90a Sandgate Road, Folkestone CT20 2BE.) 255 pages; 64 black-and-white plates; 2 line-drawings. Paperback, £12.00.

This most useful book on the birds of Corsica gives descriptions of the status (both past and present), migration dates, summer and winter distributions, and habitats of all the species that have been claimed to occur there. The systematic list is preceded by six introductory chapters which deal respectively with the geography, the habitats and their avifauna, the characteristics of the avifauna, the migrations, the history of ornithology, and bird collections. Finally, there is an extensive reference list, as well as the usual indexes.

My main criticism is of the maps, which are small, incomplete and cramped amongst the text. Each of those showing relief, vegetation, towns and regions should occupy a whole page. Nevertheless, I recommend the book, especially to those with a knowledge of French.

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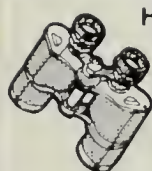
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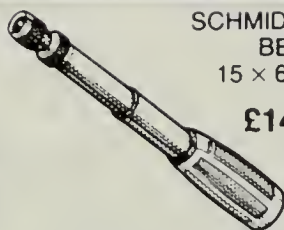
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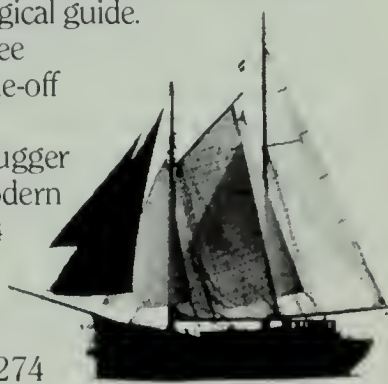
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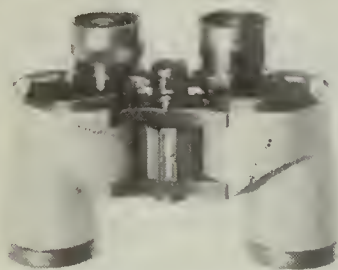
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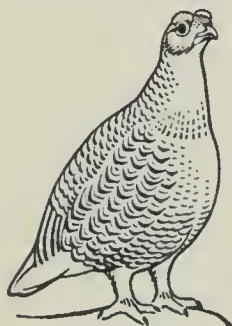
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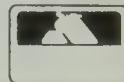
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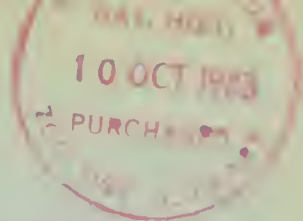


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Field identification of Wheatear and Isabelline Wheatear

Alan Tye and Hilary Tye



The Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* and the Isabelline Wheatear *O. isabellina* have overlapping breeding and wintering ranges (Vaurie 1959) and

frequently occur in the same habitat (Cornwallis 1975). Identification in these circumstances may be difficult, as Isabelline Wheatear and female Wheatear are notoriously similar.

In a recent study of the two species in their winter quarters in West Africa, we found that a combination of plumage and behavioural characteristics almost always permitted reliable identification, even in poor viewing conditions. In addition to our work in West Africa, one of us has previously worked on Wheatears in Britain (Tye 1982), and we have examined skins of both species at the Office de la Recherche Scientifique et Technique Outre-Mer (ORSTOM), Richard-Toll, Senegal, and at Cambridge University.

Throughout this paper, we do not discriminate between the two subspecies of the Wheatear, *oenanthe* and *leucorrhoa*, which are usually not certainly distinguishable in the field. Our descriptions below refer primarily to winter-plumaged individuals, identification of which may be particularly difficult.

Previously established identification criteria

Svensson (1975) quoted the colour of the axillaries and underwing-coverts (uniform white or very pale buffish-white on Isabelline, dark grey with pale fringes on Wheatear) and bill length (18.2–20.7 mm in Isabelline, 15.3–18.3 mm in Wheatear of the race *oenanthe*) as reliable guides. The race *leucorrhoa* of the Wheatear, however, has a bill measuring 17–19 mm (Witherby *et al.* 1940; personal measurements), and Isabelline's bill may be as small as 17 mm (personal measurements), sometimes rendering this character unreliable for field identification. Some Isabellines, however, have a tiny hook at the tip of the upper mandible, which is visible in the field under optimum viewing conditions; this is lacking on Wheatear (S. C. Madge *in litt.*). Although underwing colour is the best characteristic for identification in the hand, it has little use as a field mark, as the underwings are difficult to see, even when the bird is preening or sallying after aerial prey.

The tail-pattern difference—well known (e.g. Bannerman 1936; Witherby *et al.* 1940; Kitson 1979), but ignored by some writers (e.g. Etchécopar & Hüe 1964; Mackworth-Praed & Grant 1965, 1973)—is useful as a field mark, but variability in the extent of black and white, particularly on Wheatear, and the relatively frequent occurrence of missing tail feathers render reliance on this character alone unsafe (Bannerman 1936; personal observations). Occasionally, Wheatears may not spread their tails adequately for the pattern to be confirmed easily (S. C. Madge *in litt.*), but the division on the outer tail feathers is often visible in normal pose or when the bird flies.

It is sometimes suggested that Isabelline appears larger-bodied than Wheatear, with a disproportionately large head (e.g. Kitson 1979; Rogers 1981; Beaman & Knox 1981). We find this a difficult character to assess and frequently misleading, especially in populations including Wheatears of the race *leucorrhoa*, but, with experience of both species, and used together with other factors, it may be taken into account.

Distinguishing Wheatear and Isabelline Wheatear

Identification of adult male Wheatears in the breeding areas and in winter

plumage should present no problems, since the distinctive summer plumage is retained during the winter. First-winter males are more difficult, and we found no reliable means of separating them from female Wheatears (cf. Witherby *et al.* 1940).

We agree with Svensson (1975) that most Isabellines are impossible to sex on plumage characteristics, especially in the field, but breeding-season behaviour and song in winter quarters (Tye, in prep.) may reveal the sex of some. In the following, winter male and female Isabelline are regarded as indistinguishable, and 'Wheatear' signifies females and first-winter males only.

Isabelline Wheatear is normally depicted as virtually identical to female Wheatear (e.g. Etchécopar & Hüe 1964, Heinzel *et al.* 1974); this is erroneous, as inspection of any museum collection will show. The characteristics listed below (summarised in table 1, page 436) are ones which we have found useful in field identification.

Plumage characteristics

GENERAL APPEARANCE Wheatear appears generally darker above, more colourful and more contrasting than Isabelline. In particular, Wheatear exhibits a sharp line between the folded wings (dark) and the underside (whitish); whereas in Isabelline, although the upperside is rather darker in shade than the underside, the two areas are similarly coloured and no sharp division is evident (cf. Etchécopar & Hüe 1964). Caution: in unusual lighting conditions, where sunlight may fall upon the upperparts of a Wheatear while the underside is in shade, the bird may appear uniformly coloured, rather like an Isabelline; further, with a low sun lighting the breast of an Isabelline while the upperparts are in shade, the effect may create the impression of a Wheatear. One should guard against rapid decisions in such circumstances. Also, occasional leucistic Wheatears, although very rare, have caused very real problems (see plate 178); these

172. Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*, Israel, April 1982 (Bertil Breijfe)





173. Left, Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*, Sudan, January 1980 (R. Glover)

174. Below, Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*, Israel, April 1982 (Bertil Breife)



should be borne in mind when vagrant Isabelline is being considered (S. C. Madge *in litt.*). Tail pattern and behaviour, however, should aid identification (see below).

UPPERPARTS Although both species have rather variable plumage, in Wheatear the upperparts are normally darker, of an olive-grey or



175. Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*, Italy, April 1971 (S. Rodebrand)



176. Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*, Cyprus, March 1979 (Lasse J. Laine)

brownish-grey colour; in Isabelline they are lighter, variously described as sandy-buff, beige or pale grey-brown ('isabelline').

UNDERPARTS The underside of Wheatear is very distinctive, with a pale chin (not normally visible in the field) and usually a pale orange-buff wash on the throat and sides of neck, extending onto the breast. In life, this often appears outlined by a transverse crescent or bar of a dirty grey or yellowish-grey colour (hardly evident on most birds in the hand) caused partly by the angle at which the lower part of the breast is seen; this is a fairly constant marking. Below this, the flanks and belly are white or greyish-white. We have not seen this patterning properly shown in any guide.

In contrast, the underside of Isabelline Wheatear appears uniformly coloured, of a pinkish-buff, slightly richer on the throat and breast and slightly paler on the belly, but without any sharp divisions or colour changes. The upperparts may appear pinkish in some lights, so that the entire bird looks pink (cf. Etchécopar & Hüe 1964). Some individuals may have almost greyish-white undersides, but, again, the entire underparts are of a uniform colour, without contrasting areas.

HEAD MARKINGS Wheatear normally has a white or creamy-white supercilium and forehead, contrasting with the dark crown and black or very dark brown lores. The ear-coverts may appear darker than the surrounding areas. On Isabelline, the supercilium is not normally distinguishable in the field from the crown, even in good viewing conditions. The forehead is usually of a similar colour to the crown, and the ear-coverts are never dark. On some males, the lores may appear dark, but most males and all females have cream lores which appear concolorous with the surrounding areas in the field. Hence, there is a distinct gap between eye and bill on most Isabelline, whereas on Wheatear bill and eye appear joined by a dark line.



177. Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*, Saudi Arabia, February 1977 (Peter J. Irving)

WINGS In the field, the underwings appear white or creamy-white on Isabelline and grey on Wheatear. When seen, this difference is normally obvious. In each species, much of the upperwing surface is the same colour as the upperparts, so that in flight it appears darker on Wheatear than on Isabelline Wheatear.

The primaries, secondaries and greater coverts of Wheatear are normally dark brown or blackish, edged narrowly or broadly with rich russet-buff. On Isabelline, they are medium to dark brown, edged broadly with pale cream. The often narrow edgings on Wheatear leave more of the dark brown exposed; on Isabelline, the brown is often almost or completely hidden by the pale edgings, and the entire wing appears concolorous with the upperparts, often leaving the dark alula rather isolated in an otherwise pale wing (cf. Beaman & Knox 1981).

RUMP AND TAIL As described by Witherby *et al.* (1940) and Kitson (1979), Wheatear normally has a third of the outer rectrices black or dark brown, with a prominent 'stem' to the inverted T; whereas Isabelline has half of the outer rectrices black or dark brown, with very little T-stem. We would emphasise, however, that plumage variability requires that other charac-



178. Leucistic juvenile Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*, Finland, August (Tuomo Salmela)

teristics also be taken into account (cf. Beaman & Knox 1981). Further, Wheatears sometimes spend long periods without spreading their tails, and a Wheatear may appear to have a lot of dark in the tail when alighting if its tail is not fully spread (S. C. Madge *in litt.*).

Behavioural characteristics

Isabelline Wheatear is sometimes quoted as having a more upright stance than Wheatear (Heinzel *et al.* 1974), or as standing higher on its legs (Etchécopar & Hüe 1964). We find this unreliable. In both species, stance

179. Adult female or first-winter Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*, Co. Cork, September 1978 (Richard T. Mills)



varies with position (on ground, mound or bush), wind speed (more crouched when windy), and activity. Field identification of individuals of intermediate plumage and in difficult viewing conditions (into the sun, in poor light, at great distance) is, however, often possible using the following behavioural characteristics, which have not, to our knowledge, been previously noted.

HEAD-BOB Used by both species when alarmed, during territorial disputes and when feeding (often after missing a prey item: personal observation), the head-bob consists of a rapid down-up movement of the head and forepart of the body, often accompanied by tail-raising and a wing-flick. Although similar in the two species, the timing of the bob is species-specific: taking about 0.2-0.3 seconds in Isabelline and ≤ 0.1 seconds in Wheatear. This difference may seem subtle, and difficult to estimate, but in fact is quite easy to judge; in particular, in Isabelline there is a distinct hesitation between the down and up movements, while in Wheatear the complete movement is so rapid that the two component parts cannot be distinguished (as a guide, it is relatively easy to tap one's finger twice within 0.2 seconds, but impossible to do so more than once in 0.1 seconds).

A further difference is that, in Isabelline Wheatear, the wing-flick is rather more pronounced and the tail-flick is often so emphasised as to reveal the white rump over the head in front view; the rapid flick of Wheatear is much less emphatic.

TAIL-WAG The tail-wagging habit has been claimed as diagnostic of Isabelline (Catley 1981). Many species of wheatear, however, have this

180. Juvenile Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*, Shetland, June 1979 (*I. S. Robertson*)





181. Adult female Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*, Suffolk, May 1948 (Eric Hosking)

habit (Bundy 1982; personal observations). Both Wheatear and Isabelline Wheatear forage by running along the ground in short moves of a few hops or paces, pausing between moves (Tye 1982); at the end of each move, the tail is normally wagged. The wagging pattern is, however, different in the two species. In Isabelline, the wag normally consists of three or four down movements: down-up-down-up-down, or down-up-down-up-down-up-down; each part of this movement is of similar duration, and the movements appear rather jerky. In Wheatear, the wag normally consists of only down-up-down, and the timing is different: one rapid flick down, followed by a slower, smoother, up-and-down movement. We would emphasise that this difference applies only to birds on the ground (or on mounds) and not on bushes, trees or other perches, where maintenance of balance interferes with it. Further, several separate movements should be observed before a diagnosis is made, as in both species the movements are not always strictly as described.

Efficiency of identification using above characters

We used the above criteria during a two-month study of both species in winter quarters in Senegal, Africa, and found that, once learnt, they

Table 1. Summary of criteria for separating Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* from female and first-winter male Wheatear *O. oenanthe*

Feature	Isabelline Wheatear	Wheatear
Size	Larger-bodied, larger head and bill, latter often with tiny hook at tip	Smaller, slenderer
PLUMAGE		
General appearance	Paler, uniformly coloured	Darker, contrasting colours
Upperparts	Pale; sandy-buff	Dark: olive- or brownish-grey
Underside	Uniform pinkish-buff	Pale orange-buff throat, white belly, with grey division. (Variable: some individuals very pale below)
Head	Poorly defined supercilium and lores (with lores a little darker on some individuals)	White supercilium, dark lores, sometimes dark ear-coverts
Wings	Underwing white; feather edgings cream	Underwing dark grey; feather edgings rusty buff
Tail	Broad black band (half of tail), slight T-stem	Narrow black band (one-third of tail), pronounced T-stem
BEHAVIOUR		
Head-bob	Slower, with hesitation	Very rapid, no hesitation
Tail-wag	Jerky, several movements	Smoother, two movements

182. Adult female or first-winter Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*, Cornwall, October 1972 (*J. B. & S. Bottomley*)



enabled rapid determination of almost every individual seen. Identifications made by each of us independently, using these same criteria, normally agreed. We regarded the following as confirming an identification: a good view of underwing; song (confirming male Isabelline: Tye, in prep.); and examination in the hand. Our identifications were correct in seven out of seven cases where underwing was observed; in four out of four cases where song was heard; and in four out of four additional cases where we examined the bird in the hand. This seems good evidence of the correctness of our criteria.

We must end on a cautionary note. All the characteristics listed are variable in both species, and identification should be based on a combination of as many as possible. If all are taken into account, correct identification should be possible in nearly every case.

Acknowledgments

We are most grateful to Gérard and Marie-Yvonne Morel for their kind help in innumerable ways during our stay in Senegal. The Office de la Recherche Scientifique et Technique Outre-Mer and the Universities of Sierra Leone and Cambridge provided facilities and specimens. Financial assistance was received from the Chapman Memorial Fund. S. C. Madge, G. J. Morel and N. J. Westwood kindly commented on the manuscript.

Summary

The separation of female and winter-plumaged Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* from winter Isabelline Wheatear *O. isabellina* in the field is discussed. The following are suggested as useful criteria: underwing colour (difficult to observe in the field), tail pattern, more uniform plumage pattern of Isabelline, certain behavioural characteristics (head-bob, tail-wag). All these characteristics are variable, so a combination should be used before confirming an identification.

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Little Whimbrel: new to Britain and Ireland

S. J. Moon



Sker Farm, near Sker Point, Mid Glamorgan, lies on the southern edge of extensive sandhills and slacks comprising Kenfig Pool and Dunes Local Nature Reserve. David E. J. Dicks and I were walking along a track adjacent to Sker Farm at about 15.45 GMT on 30th August 1982, when we disturbed two birds from nearby dunes. DEJD said 'Whimbrel' and both of us glanced at them through binoculars. One was indeed a Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*, showing extensive white on its lower back and rump, but, to my surprise, I could see that the accompanying bird had completely brown upperparts. The Whimbrel flew away, but the second bird settled nervously about a hundred metres from us and, after a while, began feeding: a delicate picking of items, including small worms, from the dune-turf. My impressions through binoculars at this range were of a long-legged, elongated, small-headed, brown wader reminiscent of an Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda*.

Excited, I set up my telescope and was amazed to see that the bird resembled a Whimbrel: it had a down-curve to its bill and possessed a crown-stripe and a supercilium. We were able to approach to within 50 m, but, since the bird was now on its own, it was difficult to make an accurate assessment of size, although I had previously thought that it was distinctly smaller than the accompanying Whimbrel. DEJD carefully stalked the bird and took several photographs, while I made the following brief field-description:

Very like Whimbrel without white rump, but with striking pale crown-stripe and pale supercilium over large, dark eye. Bill much shorter than Whimbrel's, straighter, and with down-curve near tip; flesh-pink on basal half of lower mandible. Distinctly long-winged look: closed wings extending just beyond tail. Very pale-faced; trace of dark brown mark between bill and eye, and thin pale eye-ring, most marked behind eye, where it contrasted with dark brown patch across ear-coverts. Finely streaked neck and breast, strongest on breast-sides. Barring on

flanks, strongest towards rear. Mantle, scapulars, rump, wing-coverts and tail the same dark brown, mottled, spotted and barred with pale buff-brown and white. Underparts pale sandy-brown. Legs long and greyish. In flight, resembling Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*. Long, pointed wings, with (except for suggestion of paler trailing edge) uniformly dark upper surface. Outermost long primary apparently white. Underwings pale greyish, somewhat darker than pale belly. Call a shank-like 'quip-quip-quip', much less rapid than Whimbrel's trill.

Initially, I considered that the bird could be the American race of the Whimbrel, *N. p. hudsonicus*, which lacks the white rump of the European race, but the size-discrepancy and the short bill forced us to consider Eskimo Curlew *N. borealis*. This seemed fanciful! That same evening, the bird was seen again by A. E. Hopkins, H. Nicholls, D. C. Palmer and N. M. Powell, but in fading light the views obtained were inconclusive. On the morning of 31st August, J. P. Martin, DCP, M. C. Powell and NMP relocated the bird and, after reference to accessible literature, identified it as a Little Whimbrel *N. minutus*. The bird remained in the area until mid-morning of Monday 6th September and was seen by well over a



183-185. Little Whimbrel *Numenius minutus*, Mid Glamorgan, September 1982 (Richard G. Smith)





186. Little Whimbrel *Numenius minutus*, Mid Glamorgan, September 1982 (W. N. A. Nelson)

thousand observers from many parts of Britain. A comprehensive series of notes, sketches and photographs (*Brit. Birds* 75: plate 237; 76: plates 183-186) was soon obtained, and the description below is compiled from notes taken by DEJD, P. G. Lansdown, JPM, SJM and W. N. A. Nelson.

SIZE Resembled small, short-billed Whimbrel; slightly smaller than Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, and only half height of and quarter bulk of Curlew *N. arquata*.

HEAD Crown-stripe off-white and clean cut, widening from just behind bill-base and extending over crown onto rear crown, bordered by dark brown lateral crown-stripes above clean-cut off-white supercilium; thin dark brown line between bill and eye, and thin off-white eye-ring, most prominent immediately behind eye where it contrasted with small dark brown triangle across ear-coverts; rest of head off-white, making eyes appear large and 'face' very pale.

UPPERPARTS Neck buff-grey, densely flecked with brown; mantle, rump and tail dark brown, mottled with pale buff, brown and white.

WINGS Upperwing-coverts generally grey-brown, with pale buff-white edgings, though some towards bend of wing more blackish brown with thinner white edgings; scapulars dark brown with off-white spots around edges, a few of these feathers showing traces of chestnut brown between dark and light areas; tertials pale brown, strongly barred dark brown; secondaries and inner primaries chequered brown and pale brown; outer primaries and lower edge of closed wing uniform dark brown. In flight, entire upperparts dark brown with darker leading edge; underwing dull grey, slightly darker than grey-brown underwing-coverts.

UNDERPARTS Neck and breast pale grey-brown finely streaked and mottled dark brown, strongest on breast-sides, where a few dark chevrons, the pattern much like

187. Little Whimbrel *Numenius minutus*, Norway, July 1969 (Gert Andersson)



pectoral band peaking downwards on to belly; undertail-coverts grey-brown with sparse, indistinct spotting; rest of underparts pale sandy-brown with several long, thin, vertical, well-spaced dark brown bars along flanks, strongest towards rear.

BARE PARTS Bill blackish-brown with flesh-pink basal half of lower mandible; bill also comparatively much shorter than bill of Whimbrel as well as thinner and straighter: gentle down-curve to distal quarter only. Legs pale grey, tinged blue.

The bird frequented an area of dune-turf as well as nearby pasture fields and golf-course fairways. On a few occasions, it was located on Sker Rocks, a nearby rocky promontory on the coast. At other times, it rested and fed in a stubble field which appeared to become more attractive the more it was ploughed, rolled and seeded by the farmer. There, it sometimes associated with Lapwings, Golden Plovers *Pluvialis apricaria* and Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris*.

Among the observers of the bird, much discussion centred on the differences between Little Whimbrel and Eskimo Curlew, and Farrand (1977) and Feare (1973) were invaluable in drawing attention to the following points:

1. *Little Whimbrel has a much more distinct crown-stripe*
2. *Eskimo Curlew has coarser breast-streaking with distinct chevrons*
3. *Little Whimbrel lacks the warm rusty tones on the underparts of Eskimo Curlew*
4. *Little Whimbrel lacks the rich cinnamon colour on the wing-linings of Eskimo Curlew*

Labutin *et al.* (1982) stated that the Little Whimbrel is 'noticeably smaller' than Eskimo Curlew and that the tail of Little Whimbrel 'extends noticeably beyond the wing-tips'. The first character is not helpful when the other species is absent. The second character does not fit the Kenfig bird, but wing:tail ratio is not always a reliable field-character, dependent as it is on feather-wear and posture. The ageing and identification of the Kenfig Little Whimbrel was aided by feather examples (scapulars and tertials) illustrated in Prater *et al.* (1977).

Labutin *et al.* (1982) described the Little Whimbrel as a rare and little-known bird with a restricted breeding range in eastern Siberia and wintering grounds in eastern Indonesia from the Moluccas eastwards to New Guinea and Australia; it straggles to New Zealand, the Celebes, Borneo and the Philippines (Vaurie 1965), and has occurred as a vagrant in the Seychelles (Feare 1973) and Norway (Andersson 1971).

The Little Whimbrel's nesting places in eastern Siberia are mostly along the valleys of small rivers among chains of low hills and mountains. Other typical nesting birds of these areas include Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla*, Redpoll *Carduelis flammea*, Naumann's Thrush *Turdus naumanni*, Willow Grouse *Lagopus lagopus*, Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*, Pintail Snipe *G. stenura*, Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*, Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*, Siberian Jay *Perisoreus infaustus* and Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* (Labutin *et al.* 1982).

The Little Whimbrel's range overlaps to a considerable degree with that of Whimbrel, but the Whimbrel's distribution is linked with forest tundra and low-lying areas, whereas the Little Whimbrel chooses open areas which have been affected by fires and have recolonising vegetation. Rarely,



188-192. Little Whimbrels *Numenius minutus*, USSR, summer 1978 (Simon Shnoll & B. M. Veprintsev)





it occurs in woodland of sparse Dahurian larch *Larix gmelinii* with much moss and lichen cover. It normally breeds in open grassland, using dry grass-leaves to form the nest.

Little Whimbrels usually appear on their breeding grounds during the last ten days of May. Nesting colonies are scattered, often being separated by hundreds of kilometres. A colony consists of from three to 30 pairs, which nest 200-300 m apart within a radius of a kilometre. Unusually for the genus *Numenius*, the male Little Whimbrel performs an aerial display flight over his territory. The normal clutch contains four eggs, laid in early June, and the incubation period is 22 or 23 days.

During the nesting season, Little Whimbrels feed on insects collected from the surface of the ground, including ground-beetles *Carabus*, weevils (Curculionidae), grasshoppers (Acrididae), beetles *Strangalia*, carpenter-ants *Camponotus*, and caterpillars. Berries are also eaten, notably bog bilberries *Vaccinium uliginosum* and bearberries *Arctous* (Labutin *et al.* 1982).

Flocks begin to form in the second half of July, and there are scattered records of presumed migrants: 100 on the River Lena north of Yakutsk near Namsk on 21st and 22nd July 1926, well south of known breeding sites; and individuals or flocks in the region of Lake Baikal from mid to late August, in northwestern Manchuria on 23rd August 1956, and at several sites in Mongolia between 22nd August and 10th September 1928, and at the end of August 1964.

Little Whimbrels that migrate as far as Australia reach their wintering grounds by October. For one to appear as far west as South Wales at a time of year when most are still migrating through Mongolia was most unexpected, but the Norwegian record was also in early autumn (at Varanger on 14th July 1969: Andersson 1971).

There are eight species in the genus *Numenius*. Two (Little Whimbrel and Eskimo Curlew) are distinguished from the rest by their small size, relatively short, only slightly decurved bills, and unspotted flight feathers. The Little Whimbrel's display flight differs markedly from the courtship display of other *Numenius* species, and Labutin *et al.* (1982) noted this as a possible further basis for the view of some systematists that Little Whimbrel and Eskimo Curlew should be placed within a separate genus, *Mesoscolopax*. Labutin *et al.* (1982) used the name Little Curlew in preference to Little Whimbrel because of 'its world wide usage and . . . the possibility that the bird is conspecific with the Eskimo Curlew'.

This Mid Glamorgan record has been accepted by the Rarities Committee and by the BOU Records Committee as the first for Britain and Ireland.

Acknowledgments

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Summary

A Little Whimbrel *Numenius minutus* was present on sand-dunes and farmland at Sker, Mid Glamorgan, from 30th August to 6th September 1982. This constitutes the first record of this species in Britain and Ireland, and the second in the Western Palearctic, the other being in Norway in 1969.

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Steve Moon, Rooklands, 36 Hookland Road, Newton, Porthcawl, Mid Glamorgan

Points of view

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

5. Let's avoid euphemisms

I can just about stomach 'land improvement' as a term to describe drainage of waterlogged areas, since, from the farmers' point of view, the land is better for growing crops, which is the purpose of agricultural areas.

The euphemistic term 'river improvement', however, describing the often irreparable destruction of a scenically beautiful and wildlife-rich river and its conversion into a 'flowing canal', invariably makes my blood boil. What is so terrifying is that the men carrying out the work with dredgers and earthmovers are often just as upset at what they have to do as I am at seeing them do it. It is some faceless man sitting miles away in some office block who has decreed that 'river improvement' must be carried out. Presumably, such a man coined the phrase, which, personally, I equate with the Nazi's 'Final Solution' of the Jews, the pet-owner's 'putting to sleep' of an unloved animal, or the assassin's 'wasting' of some hapless fellow human being.

Sometimes, I have even noted conservationists using the phrase, writing or saying that 'River improvement has spoiled the area'. Please let's not encourage the uncommitted to think that we are unbalanced. 'River improvement' should be reserved for the restoration of a formerly polluted or ruined area, or the addition of an attractive or useful feature.

And while I'm about it, let's not talk of 'waste ground' when we mean valuable wilderness area. If *we* call it 'waste', we can hardly complain when someone brings in a bulldozer and turns it into a carpark.

J. T. R. SHARROCK
Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ

Mystery photographs

82 As a medium-sized wader feeds in the marsh on a fine spring morning, its delicate movements are halted as it spots the observer. The bird's relatively small head, short tail and medium length, but rather slim, straight bill and longish legs indicate one of the smaller species of the genus *Tringa*.

The intensely streaked head and breast, prominently mottled upperparts and conspicuous white eye-ring are unfamiliar (recalling a well-marked breeding Redshank *T. totanus*, but this bird has dull legs, and the markings do not extend below the breast). Both Marsh Sandpiper *T. stagnatilis* and Lesser Yellowlegs *T. flavipes* would have considerably longer legs and, especially the former, longer bills.

Before jumping to the conclusion that it must be a rarity, however, we need to consider the more common possibilities. In general shape and size,



193. Adult Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria*, Trinidad, April 1981 (David Tomlinson)

194. Juvenile Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*, Gwynedd, August 1977 (R. J. Chandler)





195. Adult Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*, Kent, July 1982 (R. J. Chandler)

the bird reminds us of both Wood *T. glareola* and Green Sandpipers *T. ochropus*, and in adult summer plumage these two are more heavily streaked on head and breast and have coarser and less regular markings above than on the more familiar juveniles in autumn. Wood Sandpiper, however, has a distinct supercilium in all plumages (e.g. adult in *Brit. Birds* 72: plate 212; juvenile in plate 194), and last month's mystery bird (repeated here).

196. Mystery photograph 83. Identify the species. Answer next month



has too long a bill for this species, the upperparts lack the prominent black markings and strikingly banded tertials, and the legs are also not quite long enough. On the other hand, it appears too slim to be a Green, the bill is too fine and the legs seem to be too long. In many respects, it seems to be intermediate between the two. It is actually a Solitary Sandpiper *T. solitaria*. If flushed, we could note its dark underwing and diagnostic dark rump and central tail.

In juvenile plumage, the head and neck plumage would be even more close to Green Sandpiper of the same age, and, indeed, the striking white eye-ring can almost be matched by that species (plate 195).

This superb portrait of a Solitary Sandpiper was taken by David Tomlinson in Trinidad in April 1981. This particular individual shows a rather less marked supercilium before the eye than do some others.

S. C. MADGE

Notes

Prolonged aerial encounters between Hen Harrier and Goshawk

On 17th February 1980, I observed a 'ringtail' (female/immature) Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* flying low over a Yorkshire moorland. I watched it for several minutes, after which it was joined by a male Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*. For the next ten minutes, the hawk mobbed the harrier almost incessantly, although for the most part the latter paid little attention. The two raptors were subsequently joined by a second ringtail Hen Harrier, and the Goshawk then divided his attacks between the two; when all three were lost below the horizon, 21 minutes had elapsed since the initial encounter and about 12 attacks had been made during this period. Throughout, the hawk used two basic methods of attack, each evoking a different response; both methods were employed with about equal frequency. The first strategy involved the Goshawk initially gaining height rapidly to a point 5-10 m above the harrier, and then stooping vertically on to it; the harrier's reaction to this was the same on each occasion: it 'side-stepped' at the last instant and contact was avoided. The second mode of attack provoked a more positive reaction. The hawk would fly strongly upwind of the harrier, and then turn and fly at high speed downwind; when just past (i.e. behind) the harrier, it would turn through 180 degrees, almost on the spot, and attack the harrier from behind. These latter encounters invariably resulted in the two raptors tumbling together in mid-air, wings flapping violently and occasionally the feet of one or both being extended, although talon-locking did not occur on any occasion; these conflicts were typically short-lived, mostly less than five seconds in duration. When both harriers were present, the one not under attack seemed oblivious of the presence of the two other raptors. On no occasion did the harriers consort together to counter-attack the Goshawk.



It is not uncommon for one raptor species to mob another, but such incidents rarely last for more than a few minutes outside the breeding season, as they are presumably wasteful in terms of energy. The above observations seem unusual in both the duration of the encounter and the ferocity which the Goshawk sustained throughout its attack.

DAVID S. MARSHALL

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One Sparrowhawk killing another In April 1979, on the banks of the River Brue, Somerset, I observed two immature male Sparrowhawks *Accipiter nisus* (in brown plumage) fighting so vehemently that they seemed likely to fall off their ledge into the water at any moment. An apparently adult female had very shortly before flown swiftly from the scene. For six or seven minutes, the two males fought, until one appeared to be gaining the mastery and eventually got the other down on his back, still fighting, and held him down, with wings outstretched as if mantling prey. There was much squealing, presumably from the losing hawk, whose struggles became more feeble. The victor started to pluck the other; shortly, a piece of flesh came away with a bunch of feathers, which was swallowed; the hawk stopped plucking and remained crouched over his victim, glaring. When the loser appeared to be dead, the victor tried to fly away, but the dead hawk's talons locked in his leg or lower body caused him to make four or five attempts before he succeeded and flew about 50m to a tree. I picked up the dead raptor and could see no injury on it except for the part of the crop torn out during plucking; one can only suppose that it was killed by the sheer strength of the victor's grip. The nearest neighbouring pair of Sparrowhawks was about 3.2km away.

HAMILTON RAMSAY

The Old Rectory, Alford, Castle Cary, Somerset BA7 7PN

Dr Ian Newton has commented as follows: 'During our work in south Scotland, among about 10,000 prey remains examined in 1971-80, we found six male Sparrowhawks (two adults, two yearlings, two fledglings) in items from the breeding season and three juvenile Sparrowhawks in those from the autumn. Whether these resulted from routine predation or from fights (the victor eating the loser) we could not say, but the fledglings were almost certainly the result of predation as they had been ringed in a neighbouring nest the previous week. We also found many instances of Sparrowhawks eating their own young after the latter had died from some other cause.' Eds

Insect food of Hobby In their paper on Hobbies *Falco subbuteo* (*Brit. Birds* 73: 275-295), D. Fiuczynski and D. Nethersole-Thompson listed various insect prey taken by this species, but the only moth specifically mentioned was the fox moth *Macrothylacia rubi*. In the Derbyshire Peak District, where Hobbies are not known to breed, their presence is firmly associated with flights of northern eggars *Lasiocampa quercus callunae*. This moth has a two-year life cycle: in Derbyshire and South Yorkshire, the adults, which fly from late June to early August, occur predominantly in odd-numbered years, their caterpillars usually being found only in even-numbered years; this pattern is discernible even as far back as the nineteenth century (F. Harrison *in litt.*). Hobbies were recorded on the Derbyshire moors in 1975, 1977, 1978 and 1979; in 1978 one flew over in September, whereas prac-

tically all the other records were of individuals catching moths between late June and August. In both July 1977 and July 1979, four Hobbies were seen on Beeley Moor, which is considered a particularly favoured area for Lepidoptera (F. Harrison *in litt.*); they were seen by scores of observers and their food was almost exclusively northern eggars, which were flying around the heather *Calluna vulgaris* in great numbers. It is interesting that, in 1980, Beeley Moor was visited by relatively large numbers of Cuckoos *Cuculus canorus* feeding on the northern eggar larvae; on 3rd July, I saw 14 Cuckoos, of which 11 were in only about 4 ha of heather moor.

For their comments and helpful discussion, I am grateful to F. Harrison, entomological recorder for Derbyshire; S. Jackson, G. Sellors, K. Smith, D. Sneap, P. Shooter, M. F. Stoye and M. E. Taylor.

R. A. FROST
66 St Lawrence Road, North Wingfield, Chesterfield, Derbyshire S42 5LL

BWP vol. 2 lists oak eggar, fox moth and emperor moth *Saturnia pavonia* among insect prey taken by Hobbies in England. Eds

Winter behaviour of Water Rails Bernard King's note (*Brit. Birds* 73: 33-35) reminded me of the following. On 6th January 1979, at Herriotts Bridge, Chew Valley Lake, Avon, I studied four Water Rails *Rallus aquaticus* closely. They were feeding beside a stream, having been forced out of reedbeds by the extreme frozen conditions. On one occasion, two met at the water's edge, and both immediately adopted the threat-posture, facing



Figs. 1 & 2. Water Rails *Rallus aquaticus*, Avon, January 1979: left, 'pear-shaped' threat posture, revealing flank-barring, with bird leaning back with neck retracted; right, 'mantling' posture of dominant bird in aggressive contact, attempting to push other bird under water by grasping crown feathers (traced by R. A. Hume from pencil sketches by A. G. Duff)

each other with stiffened necks drawn back and bills slightly opened and directed towards the other; their flank feathers were splayed outwards, revealing the barring, and making the rails look curiously pear-shaped (fig. 1). A fight then ensued in which each buffeted the other from the front and faced the other with kicking feet and flapping wings (this seems to have been the counterpart of the typical fight between Coots *Fulica atra*, although

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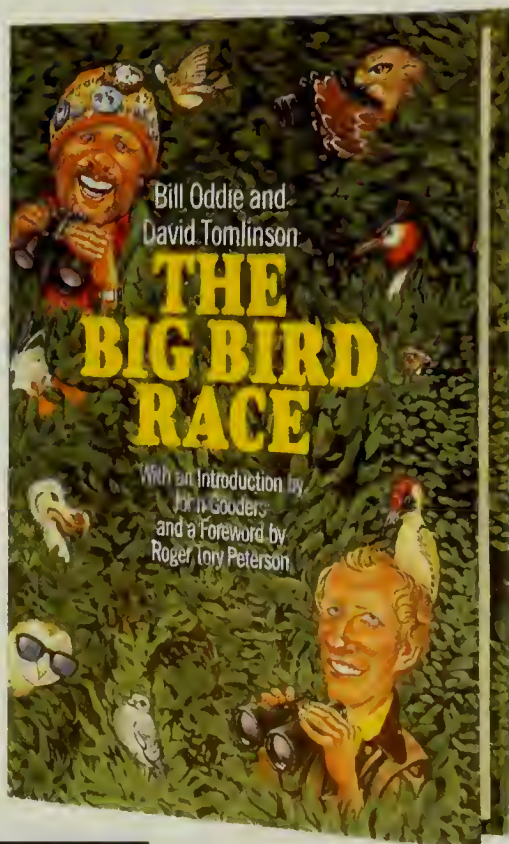
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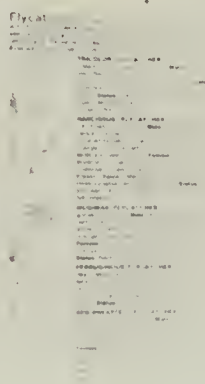
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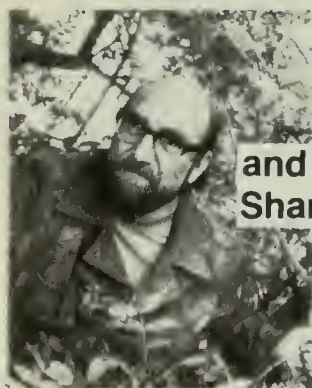
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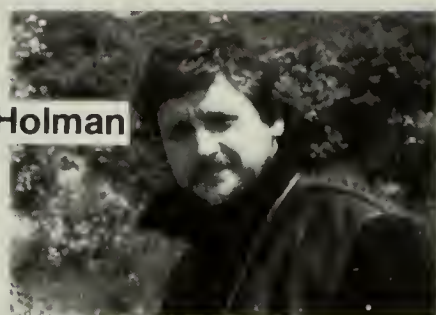
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ABTA IATA

it took place on land). One rail managed to get the upper hand, grasping the crown and nape feathers of the other in its bill tip, ending up on top of it and facing the same way. The former's wings were held open, 'mantling' the by-then cowering rail underneath (fig. 2); still grasping the other's crown feathers, it then forcibly pulled its adversary to the water's edge, attempting unsuccessfully to submerge the latter's head. The losing rail broke free and retreated into the reeds, closely pursued by the victor. Aggressive contact lasted about two minutes, during which there was much 'sharming' and squealing, although it was difficult sometimes to tell whether alarm notes were included.

A. G. DUFF

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One Moorhen killing and eating another On 25th March 1980, from the hide at Abberton Reservoir, Essex, I saw a Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus* land on the water beside a Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* and attack it. The gull picked up the Moorhen by the neck and tried, without success, to fly off with it. It then lost interest, and the Moorhen swam towards a raft anchored opposite the hide. A second Moorhen left the raft and swam to meet the first. It jumped on it, turning it over, and held it under the water until it had drowned; the victim offered little resistance. The attacker began to peck at and eat the dead Moorhen, continuing to do so until my companion and I left some 15 minutes later.

J. M. CAWSTON

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N. A. Wood has commented as follows: 'The gull's action is perhaps the most strange, unless the Moorhen was already either quite severely injured or in a diseased state: a healthy Moorhen is a very agile bird. The Moorhen's subsequent encounter with a second Moorhen tends to suggest that it was not healthy or uninjured: assuming that it was not paired to the second Moorhen, in normal circumstances it would have either retreated from the oncoming bird or, on meeting it, performed 'Mutual-retreat display' (*Brit. Birds* 67: 104-115; *BWP* 2). Actual combat takes place only when one Moorhen challenges over territory/boundary ownership, and is hardly likely under the circumstances described. The act of cannibalism seems quite in order, as Moorhens have been recorded taking various carrion: dead sheep (*Orn. Mitt.* 30: 175-177), a gull (*Brit. Birds* 58: 509), fish (*Gerfaut* 39: 195-198; *Orn. Mitt.* 18: 123; *Charadrius* 5: 146); a Moorhen has also been reported killing and eating a small bird captured in a mistnet (*Aves* 9: 138).' Eds

Cranes in Kent in October 1982 At the end of October 1982, a large influx of Cranes *Grus grus* occurred in Kent, mainly in the Romney Marsh and Dungeness area. The first were two at Walland, Romney Marsh, at dusk on 27th, but these may not have been associated with the main influx, which occurred on 30th, when several flocks were seen during the day. As the flocks were seen at different times, it is impossible to say with certainty how many individuals were involved in total on 30th, but 114 is the maximum. The largest number seen simultaneously was 73, in two flocks, at dusk over the Dungeness RSPB reserve. On 31st, flocks of 18, ten and five were at Folkestone, Dungeness, and Sandwich Bay, respectively. On 1st November, a flock of 26 was seen at Fairfield, Romney Marsh. All were seen only in flight, except for 17 on the Isle of Sheppey, which were regularly observed feeding from 10th November until they left at 12.30 GMT on 13th;

Table 1. Flocks of Cranes *Grus grus* in Kent during 27th October to 31st November 1982
Where the same birds were involved, records are bracketed

Date	Flock size	Time GMT	Locality (all Kent)
27.10.82	2	15.40	Walland
30.10.82	2	09.30	Dungeness*
	14	10.00-13.00	Dungeness*
	17	11.30	Dungeness
	8	14.30	Dungeness*
	33)	16.30-17.00	(Dungeness
	40)		(Dungeness*
31.10.82	10	09.00	Hamstreet)
	9 & 1	09.30	Dungeness)
	5	10.00	Sandwich Bay
	18	11.00	Folkestone
1.11.82	26	—	Fairfield
8.11.82	4	—	Sheppey
10-13.11.82	17	—	Sheppey)
13.11.82	17	14.00	Dungeness)

*Details not yet submitted to Rarities Committee

these 17 were seen later that day, flying over Dungeness at 14.00 GMT. All observations during the period are listed in table 1. About 170 would be a reasonable estimate of the minimum number of individuals involved in the influx during 27th October to 13th November, with about 192 as the possible maximum.

The arrival of the Cranes was undoubtedly related to a period of mainly light (up to force 4) variable northeasterly to southeasterly winds, with mist and drizzle over eastern Europe, the southern North Sea and southeast England during 27th-31st October. These conditions were identical to those during 30th-31st October 1963, when the previous large influx of about 500 Cranes occurred, mainly in Sussex (*Brit. Birds* 57: 502-508).

Although fewer were involved in 1982 than in 1963, there were simultaneous reports of unusually large numbers on the western Continental seaboard, mainly in the Netherlands and northwest France.

I thank the many observers involved with these records, especially T. E. Bowley, R. K. Coles, N. R. Davies, S. W. Gale and P. J. Makepeace.

SÉAN MCMINN

Dungeness Bird Observatory, 11 RNSSS Cottages, Dungeness, Romney Marsh, Kent

Lapwings robbing Golden Plovers On 28th January 1980, about 150 Golden Plovers *Pluvialis apricaria* were feeding on a grassy field near Seaton Ross, North Humberside. Scattered among them were 22 Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus* and three Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus*. Not only the gulls, but also the Lapwings continuously stole food from the Golden Plovers. Like the gulls, they watched their cousins intently and seemed able to sense imminent prey-capture by the latter. The Lapwing closest to me charged plovers four times in ten minutes and picked up something on two occasions. I suspect that the whole hectic episode stemmed from an unusually prolific food source and the fact that the markedly efficient predation of

this by the Golden Plovers allowed the other two species high odds of successful theft.

D. I. M. WALLACE

68 Selby Road, Holme on Spalding Moor, by York YO4 4EU

Crab-eating technique of Curlew On 16th July 1979, in the River Bann estuary near Coleraine, Co. Londonderry, I watched a Curlew *Numenius arquata* foraging among seaweed-covered rocks for about four minutes, during which time it caught two crabs. In both instances, it carried the crab in the tip of its bill to exposed mud away from the water, where it transferred the prey to the base of its bill and deftly mandibulated it so that the legs and claws were broken off in quick succession; when all the limbs had been removed, it swallowed the body whole, then picked up the limbs one by one and ate them. The whole sequence from capture to completion of consumption took only about 20 seconds. After eating all ten limbs of the first crab, the Curlew returned to the rocks and caught another. *The Handbook* lists small crabs among food items eaten by Curlews, but the only description of the methods of dealing with prey is 'shifting it without effort from tip of bill to gullet with slight jerking motion of head'. While this simple movement may be sufficient to ingest more manageable prey items, crabs obviously require more attention.

D. J. RADFORD

4 High Ridge, Alton, Hampshire

Although crabs are a well-known prey of Curlews, the method of dealing with them does not appear to be well documented. We have, however, published an excellent colour photograph of the capture and a description by the photographer, Keri Williams, of how the Curlew removed the crab's legs before swallowing the body (*Brit. Birds* 72: 226, plate 107). EDS

Great Skua killing adult Herring Gull On 15th November 1977, after four days of severe northwest gales, heavy seabird passage was still taking place off St Ives, Cornwall. Some Great Skuas *Stercorarius skua* remained to hunt in the bay for long periods. A number of gulls *Larus* were feeding at the sewer outlet, mostly by swooping down to the water to pick up emerging morsels. A Great Skua flew in from the open sea at a height of about 5 m, towards the gulls; when over them, it dived swiftly onto an adult Herring Gull *L. argentatus*, pinning it to the water and delivering heavy blows to its head and neck with its bill. The gull, apparently taken completely by surprise, offered little resistance: it was forced lower and lower into the sea, and within about five minutes the skua was perched on its inert corpse, balancing with half-open wings as both drifted across the bay. Half an hour later, the gull's half-eaten remains were washed back by the tide, the skua having taken mainly the breast and entrails.

D. M. NORMAN

Hazelmere, 50 Shirburn Road, Torquay, Devon

Instances of adult Herring Gulls forming part of the diet of Great Skuas at North Atlantic breeding localities were noted by Dr R. W. Furness (*Ibis* 121: 86-92), but D. M. Norman's observation adds detail of the method used by the skua. EDS

Herring Gull locating food with feet On 7th June 1980, I watched an adult Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* foraging at low tide at Sheep Haven, near Dunfanaghy, Co. Donegal. Much of the sandy bottom of the inlet was

exposed, and one small channel carried most of the water flowing into the sea. The gull flew to the edge of the channel and walked into the water. It sat on the water, facing into the current, and paddled with its feet for periods of about ten seconds, these alternating with rest periods of a few seconds during which it slowly drifted back part of the way. This sequence of paddling and resting was repeated frequently during a period lasting 10-15 minutes, during which time the gull had progressed about 10 m up the channel and captured five crabs. The paddling action was obviously more vigorous than that required merely to swim up the channel, and created some turbulence. When paddling, the gull looked downwards, and, on spying its prey, upended in the manner of a Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* so that its head and upper body were immersed; all five crabs were caught in fairly quick succession. The following morning, a Herring Gull (possibly the same individual) behaved similarly in the same channel: in five minutes, it caught and ate two small crabs. *The Handbook* does not mention Herring Gulls making foot movements of this kind to find prey.

D. J. RADFORD

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Dark breast-side marks on adult Whiskered Terns On 24th March 1982, we watched at least six adult winter Whiskered Terns *Chlidonias hybridus* at Lake Tiberias in Israel. Three showed variable dark marks on the breast-sides, which took the form of a 'comma' on two birds but a fairly large round spot on the third; the others showed no such marks. This plumage feature is known to occur on juveniles and first-winter individuals at least until December, but our observations show that it can also be shown by adults in winter plumage.

IAN HODGSON, TREVOR WYATT and TERRY WYATT

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Little Auks scavenging at trawler Philip Watson (*Brit. Birds* 74: 82-90) mentioned Razorbills *Alca torda* and Guillemots *Uria aalge* being seen in circumstances suggesting that they were scavenging at trawlers. On a few occasions during 12th-16th November 1959, I saw Little Auks *Alle alle* pick up waste fragments from alongside a research trawler fishing on the Nova Scotian Shelf (43°N, 63°W): in nearly calm weather, with the vessel stopped, singles fed without diving where a trickle of washdown water was carrying waste out of a scupper. One of the main fish in the catches was redfish *Sebastes mentella*, a species that often feeds on macroplanktonic crustaceans such as euphausiids, hyperiid amphipods and the larger copepods. Expansion of swimbladders often causes stomach eversion in redfish, so the washdown water would have contained items similar to the Little Auk's normal food.

E. I. S. REES

Carreg y Gad, Llanfairpwll, Gwynedd

House Martins attempting copulation in flight In the late 1970s, on warm days during mid to late September, in northeast Hampshire, I observed House Martins *Delichon urbica* apparently copulating, or attempt-

ing to copulate in the air. This was preceded by a 'courtship' display in which a group of two or three martins indulged in a short aerial display, often with arched wings held in a V-shape and a short downward spiral, one slip-streaming another. The successful individuals usually paired off, and one alighted on the back of the other, the two falling through the air for a metre or so before separating. In September 1980, I frequently witnessed this alighting of one upon another. Whether the martins were juveniles or adults I do not know, since the behaviour often occurred towards evening, when plumage details are obscured by failing light. I have often watched House Martins in spring, but have not seen anything approaching this behaviour; in fact, the martins almost immediately commence refurbishing old nests, and I have assumed that mating takes place on the completed nest.

E. M. RAYNOR

Priors Mead, Nash Meadow, South Warnborough, Hampshire

Dr D. M. Bryant has commented as follows: 'In my experience, House Martins invariably mate in the nest; this is so for established pairs and (much more obvious) for promiscuous mating attempts by unpaired males with paired females. The aerial aspect of Mr Raynor's observations is obviously unusual, but not impossible: any confusion with adults feeding their young in the air, which is fairly common, seems unlikely. We already have evidence from their behaviour that some young House Martins show precocial development: they help to feed young of subsequent broods; sexual behaviour in advance of full maturity is therefore not unexpected. Alternatively, this could be an autumn resurgence of sexual activity among adults, a phenomenon widespread among temperate-zone birds. That the behaviour described occurs in autumn, but not in spring, suggests that it involves birds without a territory (=nest); I feel that it is most likely to involve young from first broods (some of which are still present in September) or from early second broods.' Eds

Roosting behaviour of House Martins The note on roosting behaviour of migrant House Martins *Delichon urbica* (*Brit. Birds* 73: 414-415) prompts the following. At about 19.00 GMT on an evening in September 1976, in northeast Hampshire, my wife and I observed a close formation of House Martins circling some elms *Ulmus*; one by one they dropped into the head of the tree, and did not reappear. Our assumption that they were roosting is reinforced by the fact that the annual build-up of martins in our village is often accompanied by a tendency to sit in a tall ash *Fraxinus excelsior* during the few days before departure; they do not appear to feed on insects among the leaves, but sit for several minutes before all resuming their flights.

E. M. RAYNOR

Priors Mead, Nash Meadow, South Warnborough, Hampshire

Hen Blackbird striking human intruder in defence of nest Dr G. Beven's note (*Brit. Birds* 73: 35-36) prompts me to record the following. On 3rd May 1979, at St Andrews, Fife, I found a female Blackbird *Turdus merula* on a well-hidden nest about 1 m above ground level, in a clump of roses *Rosa* and ivy *Hedera* in the garden of a church. At 19.15 GMT, I returned and found her absent from the nest, which contained two nestlings and one egg. I returned again to ring the young: I put my hand towards the nest, and it was immediately pecked by the female Blackbird; this continued for several seconds until she left the nest, hopping only about 1/2 m away and remaining

in the roses and ivy. When my hand entered the nest to remove the nestlings, the female rushed at it and pecked it several times; while I ringed the nestlings, she remained in cover, constantly uttering alarm calls. There was no sign of a male. I replaced the nestlings and the back of my hand was again pecked. At 11.00 GMT on 7th May, the female was gathering food, and the two young were still in the nest; there was no sign of a male Blackbird. At 13.45 on 10th May, the young had left the nest and there was still a single egg present; when I put my hand into the nest, it was attacked by the female, which had remained unseen. On 14th May, the nest was empty, and the female and one of the ringed young were standing nearby under cover, with a male Blackbird in close attendance. T. W. DOUGALL
Department of Geography, The University, St Andrews, Fife KY16 9AL

Dr C. J. Bibby has commented that this does seem to have been a very aggressive female, but that 'you do not have to ring a lot of suburban Blackbird chicks to get pecked'. EDS

Song period of Moustached Warbler Dr Colin Bibby, in his informative article on the Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon* (*Brit. Birds* 75: 346-359), stated that song may start in mid March. In the Camargue, I have occasionally found this species singing on warm sunny days in February, and I believe that it sometimes sings in January. At this time of year, it is very easy to locate, being the only species singing from reed-beds, no trans-Saharan migrants having yet arrived. Later in the spring, it is difficult to find, even though it recommences singing in mid May. These two song periods may indicate that at least some Camargue birds are double-brooded. Blondel & Isenmann (1981, *Guide des Oiseaux de Camargue*) suggested that some may even have three broods. TONY WILLIAMS
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Great Reed Warbler attacking Reed Warblers On 10th June 1979, at Brandon Marsh, Warwickshire, we observed a Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* attack the breeding Reed Warblers *A. scirpaceus* several times in flight. It grasped one of the latter and then, either by accident or by design, tumbled to the water's surface, where a struggle ensued, each time resulting in the submergence of the captive bird for a second or two before it escaped and flew off. The Reed Warblers were in song and were presumably regarded as competitors by the Great Reed Warbler. W. T. JACKSON and D. A. STONE

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Whitethroats breeding on Welsh heather moor During 1979, 11 pairs of Whitethroats *Sylvia communis* bred, and a further six were present, on a grouse moor in east Clwyd. All sites were in long, dense heather *Calluna vulgaris*, usually with an admixture of bilberry *Vaccinium myrtillus* and bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*, and near water courses, usually in hollows; they ranged from 1,000-1,375 feet (300-420 m) above sea level, with most at 1,150-1,300 feet (350-400 m). Similar numbers were present in 1980. In May 1961, on the same moor, I found a nest with four eggs in dense heather; the species was common there in 1965 and 1966. JOHN LAWTON ROBERTS
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Treecreepers rearing Blue Tit On 31st May 1979, in a small wood near Arkholme, Lancashire, I found a Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris* incubating a clutch of seven eggs in a nestbox. The clutch was photographed. On examination of the photographs, one egg appeared smaller than the others and without the dense zone of spots. On 17th June, the box contained four young Treecreepers and one young Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus*, all healthy, feathered and about 10-12 days old; I ringed them (and also a brood of 11 Blue Tits in a box about 35m away). Five days later, the Treecreepers had gone, but the Blue Tit remained; in the space of 15 minutes, Treecreepers were twice seen entering the box with food. On 29th June, the box was empty (as was the Blue Tit box nearby). It appeared that the Treecreepers carried on feeding the Blue Tit when their own young had fledged, and had reared it successfully. There are accounts of young Great Tits *P. major* being reared by Nuthatches *Sitta europaea* (Dr C. M. Perrins, 1979, *British Tits*) and by Robins *Erithacus rubecula* (Dr J. S. Ash, 1950, *Brit. Birds* 43: 300).

K. B. BRIGGS

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Derek Goodwin has commented that it is particularly interesting that the young Blue Tit was tended by the Treecreepers even after their own young had left the nest. Eds

Red-backed Shrike with white primary patch A. R. Dean noted, in his 'Field characters of Isabelline and Brown Shrikes' (*Brit. Birds* 75: 395-406), that 'adult male Red-backed Shrikes *Lanius collurio* may in exceptional circumstances reveal a trace of white at the base of the primaries.'

I was one of a group who made a brief visit to northern Syria on 9th and 10th May 1979. Shrikes were a frequent roadside casualty and we often stopped to inspect the remains. One dead individual on 10th May was a typical Red-backed Shrike in all respects, except that it had a prominent white patch at the base of its primaries, no less marked than that on the adult Isabelline Shrike *L. isabellinus* shown in plate 151.

Professor Dr K. H. Voous has noted that 'widespread hybridisation has been reported' (*Brit. Birds* 72: 575); our Syrian individual, however, appeared typical in all respects other than its wing patch. I suggest, therefore, that adult male Red-backed Shrikes very occasionally have an obvious white wing-patch.

P. A. DOHERTY

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A. R. Dean has commented: 'On Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*, Brown Shrike *L. cristatus* and Isabelline Shrike *L. isabellinus* the bases of the primaries are white, but only on the last species does this regularly show as a white patch on the folded wing. On the first two species, the area of white is normally small, and is therefore covered by the overlying primary coverts, but occasional individuals (especially adult males) may have rather more extensive white which forms a visible feature on the wing. Such an extensive white patch as that described by P. A. Doherty is certainly rare (and in a road casualty the primary coverts may have been displaced), but a similar bird was trapped on Fair Isle, Shetland, in May 1981 (plate 197). Hybridisation is known to produce individuals with an obvious white primary patch yet head and body like adult male Red-backed, but, additionally, such birds normally display rufous tones in the tail (they have been termed 'karelini-type' in some works). An extensive white patch on birds otherwise identical with typical Red-backed seems, however, more likely to represent an extreme in individual variation rather than hybridisation. Such occurrences underline the point made early in my paper that, although a useful clue, undue emphasis



197. Male Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* with white patch showing at base of primaries. Shetland, May 1981 (Elizabeth Riddiford)

should not be placed on the presence (or absence) of a white primary patch.' We have been informed by Nick Riddiford that another Red-backed Shrike with a white patch (about 5 mm below the primary coverts) occurred on Fair Isle in early June 1983. Eds

Great Grey Shrike pellet analysis In March 1979, during a period of extreme snow and ice, a Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor* appeared on an area of wasteland at Newby, Scarborough, North Yorkshire. From 11th, and daily until 28th, it spent much of its time inside a low thicket of willow *Salix* scrub, coming out at intervals to watch for prey from a prominent perch. I saw it once take a small rodent, return to the thicket, and pluck at the fur on the rodent's back; it then appeared to swallow its prey whole. On 29th March, I searched the thicket and found four pellets; they were shiny, compact, about 3 cm long and 2½ cm at the widest point. Each of three dissected at the Scarborough Natural History Museum contained the entire remains of a field vole *Microtus agrestis*; as no insect remains were found, it would appear that the shrike had fed exclusively on the voles, which were numerous as evidenced by the many runs seen on the snow-covered observation area. Neither the Museum Curator nor I could find any description of Great Grey Shrike pellets in the literature.

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David Glue, who published an analysis of 30 Great Grey Shrike pellets from the New Forest, Hampshire, in 1968 (*Brit. Birds* 61: 468), has commented as follows: 'My analysis confirmed voles as prey items of importance—as implied by *The Handbook* and the work in Germany by D. Bayer (1950, *Kosmos* 46: 523)—but suggested perhaps a more varied diet for shrikes wintering in the New Forest. The sample was very small, though, and I have often asked for more pellets (not easy to come by, and difficult to analyse). *Microtus* remains always seem to "come through" well compared with some other mammals, birds, and especially insects.' Eds

Carrion Crows causing death of Grey Heron On 12th June 1979, I saw a Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* flying east at about 20m over the crest of a low hill in urban Walthamstow, London. It attracted five Carrion Crows *Corvus corone* and, while attempting to evade them, circled. The crows harassed the heron for ten to 15 minutes, culminating in a more intensive attack when they repeatedly 'buzzed' it. At least one crow possibly alighted on the heron's back and pecked; certainly, very close contact by all five crows occurred. The final attack lasted only about one minute, after which the heron lost flying speed and dived vertically, with its wings half extended, crashing on the flat roof of a building. The crows, noisy throughout, maintained their calling while they descended to attack the body of the dead heron. It is not clear whether the heron was fatally wounded before it crashed; the right humerus, left femur and perhaps other bones were broken on impact. The final attack occurred only 30m from a crow's nest from which young had fledged earlier. The heron weighed 1,800g, within the recorded weight ranges for adults.

GRAHAM J. WALTERS

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Seventy-five years ago...

'GREEN WOODPECKER *versus* STARLING. BY EMMA L. TURNER, F. L. S. WHILE wandering about soon after dawn on the morning of May 8th, I came across one of the most amusing incidents connected with bird life which I have ever watched.

'A pair of Green Woodpeckers, after having for some years enjoyed undisputed possession of a nesting hole in an oak tree, were engaged in a "tooth-and-nail" encounter with a pair of Starlings which were maliciously endeavouring to obtain possession of their neighbour's home. The dispute raged continuously till May 14th, when I settled it by putting up a nesting-box for the Starlings; this they immediately annexed, and ultimately both pairs brought off their respective broods in safety and comparative peace . . . 'A favourite trick of the Starlings was to sit on a branch some little distance away and "yaffle". This at first always lured the Woodpecker from her hole, and during the week of fighting the Starlings became very proficient in "yaffling", but after a time the Woodpecker learnt wisdom and was not deceived. So the fight alternated for a week until I began to fear for the ultimate success of the rightful owners of the nesting site, and even went so far as to harden my heart and consult with the powers that be as to the advisability of shooting the robbers. On one occasion, however, there had been Starlings and one Woodpecker inside the tree together; so it seemed more than probable that, if this marauding pair suffered the extreme penalty of the law for their sins, others might carry on the feud. Consequently, the nesting-box was tried first, with happy results; for the Starlings occupied it the same evening (May 14th), and their young ones were fledged on June 19th, while the young Woodpeckers flew away a week later. Evidently even in wild nature the strongest does not always win, art and science hold their own. This the Starlings seemed to know well when they pitted their wits against mere physical strength; for it seemed to me they would win finally by mere persistence and cunning.' (*Brit. Birds* 2: 141-145, October 1908)

Letters

The Northumberland Aleutian Tern I should like to comment on the remarkable record of an Aleutian Tern *Sterna aleutica* in Northumberland (Dixey *et al.* 1981). The distinctive polysyllabic call noted is the basis of some Alaskan Eskimo names for the species, such as 'chif-chif-chu-ak'

(Petersen *et al.* in prep.). Dixey *et al.* (1981) suggested that long grass was preferred for nesting, but at several Alaskan colonies very low ericaceous-lichen heath was preferred for nesting and for loafing (Gabrielson & Lincoln 1959; Petersen *et al.* in prep.; R. Gill *in litt.*). In a mixed colony of about 250 pairs of Aleutian Terns and 500 pairs of Arctic Terns *S. paradisea* covering about 0.7 km², the nesting, loafing and bathing areas used by the two species tended to be segregated and little aggression was seen between them (Petersen *et al.* in prep.). The Northumberland bird could have wintered in austral seas and entered the wrong ocean in spring, as suggested by Dixey *et al.* (1981). The other possibilities are that it traversed an Arctic coast in autumn to enter the Atlantic Basin, or that it crossed the Central American isthmus in spring; both seem unlikely. Aleutian Terns are pelagic (Kessel & Gibson 1978) and there was only one record in about 15 years just inland from a coast about 150 km long where they bred and occurred widely (Petersen *et al.* in prep.). Some seabirds clearly do traverse the Arctic coast of Canada and Alaska, since Little Auks *Alle alle* probably breed near the Bering Straits (Kessel & Gibson 1978), but migration watches on the Canadian coast of the Beaufort Sea have indicated that Arctic Terns there come from the west in spring and return west in autumn; no Aleutian Terns were seen (Searing *et al.* 1975). A Siberian coastal route seems improbable.

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Cirl Buntings and elm trees One must question Mr Mitchell's basic assumption that the English elm *Ulmus procera* is the 'favoured habitat' of the Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus* (*Brit. Birds* 75: 589-590). I, too, accepted this widely held view when I first became interested in the species in the late 1930s in Sussex and east Hampshire, where elms were often present in Cirl Bunting habitats; at that time, I bowed to the opinions of more experienced ornithologists, such as the late John Walpole-Bond who wrote (1938, *A History of Sussex Birds*): 'The Cirl Bunting evinces a great partiality for elms. In nearly all its Sussex haunts these trees form a distinctive feature of the scenery.' I now believe that he was justified in writing only the second of those sentences. It is hardly surprising that the elm was found so often in Cirl Bunting territories: it was then one of the commonest trees in southern England.

In 1943 in Tunisia, and shortly afterwards in Italy, I found Cirl Buntings

nesting where elms were completely absent. If Cirls did not require elms there, why should they in England? Later, in areas of France, Spain and elsewhere on the Continent, I found Cirls common but elms rare. Since 1945, I have watched Cirl Buntings in most English counties where they have occurred, during the past 25 years concentrating mainly on west Hampshire, east Dorset and south Wiltshire and paying particular attention to habitat. Elms have featured in significantly less than half of these: for example, until the early 1970s, only two of seven regularly occupied sites within walking distance of my home had elms in or near them; several other tree or bush species (including conifers) were used as song posts, and dead tree stumps were frequently used (Dutch elm disease could actually help here!). If one rejects the elm/Cirl relationship, as I do, there is little point in discussing the possibility of Dutch elm disease contributing to the decline of the Cirl Bunting, which, as Mr Sitters pointed out (75:590), had already started long before the disease appeared in Britain.

NORMAN ORR

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Since 1970, several English elms in East Portlemouth, Devon, used as song posts by Cirl Buntings, have been felled; yet the number of singing males has remained fairly constant. The buntings do not show a preference for song perches in English elm; indeed, when deciduous trees are in full leaf, they tend to favour more exposed song posts: telegraph poles and wires, television aerials, or the topmost branches of gorse bushes *Ulex*, for instance. If the loss of song posts is regarded as a plausible explanation for the decline of the Cirl Bunting in Britain, perhaps we should look more closely at the tendency for British Telecom to put their wires underground, so enabling them to dispense with telegraph poles, which, in Devon at least, seem to be perfectly adequate alternatives to hedgerow trees.

SIMON J. LEACH

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The paper by Humphrey Sitters on Cirl Buntings (*Brit. Birds* 75: 105-108) made no mention of the fact that, in established territories at least, males sing all the year round. Only severe winter weather temporarily halts this song.

Those comments about leaves on trees (*Brit. Birds* 76: 589-590) are, as Sitters pointed out, of no consequence.

V. R. TUCKER

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The decline of the Cirl Bunting Humphrey Sitters, in his paper on the decline of the Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus* in Britain (*Brit. Birds* 75: 105-108), made valuable points concerning the difficulties of censusing the species accurately, but it is hard to agree with his assumption that the Cirl Bunting 'may not have colonised southern England until the end of the 18th century'. That nobody mentioned it until Colonel Montagu discovered it at Kingsbridge, Devon, in the winter of 1800 is insufficient evidence that it was not there a century or more earlier. One could similarly assume that the harrier (*Circus pygargus*) which now bears Montagu's name also colonised

Britain some unspecified but short time before his identification of the 'Ash-coloured Harrier' in 1802; there is no reason to assume that Montagu's Harrier was any less common in the 18th than in the 19th century. Unless evidence turned up to substantiate a spread of either species in adjoining parts of the Continent, comparable to the recent spread of the Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* on a smaller scale, it is safer to assume that both Montagu's Harrier and Cirl Bunting were in Britain all the time, lurking behind the somewhat similar plumages of the Hen Harrier *C. cyaneus* and the Yellowhammer *E. citrinella*, respectively. In 1822, when Henry Mewburn of St Germans, east Cornwall, presented to Newcastle Museum a Cirl Bunting shot just across the Devon border in Stoke Damerel, he described the species as 'frequenting woods and high trees' in his area, precisely in the region surrounding the mouth of the Tamar where they are relatively frequent today (see Sitters's fig. 1). Kingsbridge is in the area where they are still thickest in south Devon. Montagu also obtained a specimen in about 1805 from Colonel George of Penryn, close to where a few pairs linger today in west Cornwall. While one can see from past records in Devon and Cornwall that Cirl Bunting numbers have fluctuated, I would infer from the earliest records that the species had long been similarly distributed as nowadays, remaining undetected until caught by Montagu's discerning eye. Nobody in Cornwall mentions even a Yellowhammer (or several other species) until 1808; the buntings can have received scant attention before Montagu.

The latter half of the 18th century was hardly a time for colonisation of southern England by a Mediterranean species. Between about 1740 and 1830, winters were generally considerably colder than today (Gordon Manley, 1955, *Climate and the British Scene*, pp. 229 & 241). A minor amelioration in the late 1700s may well have allowed an increase in the population of the Cirl Bunting, as also of the Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*, which Montagu was the first to discover in Cornwall (in September 1796, not far inland from Falmouth). Perhaps the best one can say is that the years around 1800 were climatically better than earlier or later decades for the scientifically curious to happen upon southern species.

R. D. PENHALLURICK
County Museum, Truro, Cornwall

The decline of the Cirl Bunting, with notes on its habits H. P. Sitters's excellent paper on the decline of the Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus* during 1968-80 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 105-108) was long overdue. I would suggest that the decline has in fact been much greater than is generally realised. In Hampshire, the species was still described in 1957 as 'breeding commonly in N & E of county', with smaller numbers elsewhere; no full breeding accounts were given during 1958-63, but in 1965 we read 'Continues scarce' (W. H. Truckle, to his credit, was the first to realise the real decline when he appealed for records during 1965-67), and in 1973 'Is the species so close to complete disappearance in the county?'; in 1977, there were only four, at three localities, and in 1981 just one singleton (*Hampshire Bird Reports*

1957-81). As a further example, in the late 1950s and very early 1960s, Cirl Buntings bred fairly commonly in the Hook-Warsash area of Hampshire, where they overlapped in habitat with Lesser Whitethroats *Sylvia curruca*. Much to my shame and regret, I kept no detailed records of numbers, but, when I returned to the area in the early 1970s after an absence of about ten years, there were no Cirls left. This is a remarkably rapid decline, greater than that of the Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*. (I imagine that I was not the only one who did not keep records of numbers in those days, and I suspect that, because of this fact, there were more Cirl Buntings breeding in 'otherwise ornithologically uninteresting' areas in southern England than reports—where they exist at all—would indicate.)

There are several statements in the literature that are, I believe, slightly misleading. Mr Sitters's five main reasons for the decline (75: 105) are basically true. So, too, is his statement (*BTO News* 118, January 1982) that both males and females can be easily overlooked during much of the breeding season, but they can also at times be just the opposite. At Warsash-Hook, Cirl Buntings were quite conspicuous both when nest-building (as they were also in northwest France in April 1981) and when feeding young just out of the nest. Also in Hampshire, during my schooldays, if I sat down on Southampton Common and waited for no more than a few minutes, inquisitive family parties would come to within 2-3m to inspect me; they were far from easily overlooked! Additionally, the note usually attributed to Cirl Buntings—'sip'—does not really describe the sound made by these buntings. To my ears, it is better rendered as 'ssĩ', a thin, sibilant but quite audible sound with no final consonant, and characteristic of the species. Finally, although Cirl Buntings often do use the tops of tall trees as perches and song-posts, they will sing equally often from the top of (and also from inside) small bushes (normally the 'thorny' type). This fact has not been adequately emphasised recently.

I would suggest that observers wishing to locate the Cirl Bunting in southern Britain today first learn the call and the song (compare and contrast it with that of Lesser Whitethroat); accept that the species does move about a lot in a generally large territory (which can change from year to year); and keep a careful watch for buntings carrying nest-material in likely habitat in April-May. At the end of the season, if breeding is suspected, family parties should not be too difficult to find if several observers co-operate to cover a large area simultaneously.

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We should remind readers that the Cirl Bunting is a Schedule 1 rare breeding species which must not be disturbed at or near the nest. Eds

Danger for birdwatchers I am writing after hearing the news about the arrest in Turkey of Simon Albrecht and Dennis Buisson (*Brit. Birds* 76: 321 & 360). I feel strongly about this as my companions and I were arrested for spying in south Morocco in 1979, but I was able to negotiate our release after 24 hours by sacrificing a large amount of film. It was a tight-run thing

and I feel that if we had not spoken the language fluently we would possibly still be there. With more and more birders travelling abroad, carrying obvious optical gear, many others could encounter the same problem as Simon Albrecht and Dennis Buisson.

D. M. NORMAN

Hazelmere, 50 Shirburn Road, Torquay, Devon

Gwent ornithological organisations The 'Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 1981' (*Brit. Birds* 75: 485) includes an expression of thanks to 'the local society' on whose reserve an American Bittern *Botaurus lentiginosus* was watched by many observers from late October 1981 to January 1982. The Magor Reserve is managed and owned by the Gwent Trust for Nature Conservation, and not by the Gwent Ornithological Society. Needless to say, there are many members common to both organisations, but the organisations are distinct and separate.

PETER MARTIN

*Chairman of Executive, Gwent Trust for Nature Conservation,
16 Royal Oak Close, Newport, Gwent NP1 8SP*

Thanks to twitchers May I thank all the birders who came to see the Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla* at Heswall, Merseyside, during January to April 1983 for their restraint in keeping out of growing crops. The collection for the Royal National Lifeboat Institution raised the sum of £26.86½p, for which the local organiser, Mrs Tinkler, is very grateful. The farmer, Mr John McDermott, on whose land the Little Bunting spent the winter, is also coxswain of the local lifeboat, and expresses his thanks.

R. A. EADES

1 Westway, Lower Heswall, Wirral, Merseyside L60 8PJ

Hundreds of rarities are seen in Britain each year, and scores become the focus for a few days of twitchers' attentions, attracting crowds of would-be observers. Unfortunately, instances of bad behaviour remain long in people's memories. We are glad to print Mr Eades's letter as an example of the normal behaviour at rare-bird sites. EDS

Announcements

£1,000-prize 'Mystery Photographs Book' This new book, announced in July (*Brit. Birds* 76: 287), is published by *British Birds* on 10th October. The photographs are not all of obscure Asiatic rarities—some are of common birds that occur daily in suburban gardens—so every *BB* reader ought to be able to identify them with the aid of a few reference books! There is, however, one extra bird to be discovered in the book: there are various cryptic clues to the identity of this enigma. The first person to identify all the birds correctly will receive a prize of at least £1,000. We hope that every *BB* reader will buy a copy of the book and 'have a go'. The book costs £4.80, but is still available to *BB* readers for £3.80 (post free in UK and Eire) through British BirdShop (see page xi).

Requests

Ornithological records from Greece The aims of the recently established Hellenic Ornithological Society are to promote bird study and conservation, to collect and publish ornithological material, and to stimulate public awareness and interest in ornithology and conservation in Greece. Foreign birdwatchers visiting Greece are kindly requested to submit a copy of their observations. For any information, please contact George I. Handrinos, 4 Erymanthias Str, Peristeri, Athens, Greece.

Colour transparencies of Israeli birds The Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel (SPNI) is making a reference collection of slides of birds taken in Israel and is keen to contact birdwatchers who have been to Israel and who are willing to help. The SPNI would like copies (or seconds) or slides and will not publish any sent to them unless permission for this has been granted by the photographer. All slides should note the date, place and photographer and, for convenience, will be forwarded to SPNI by Richard Porter, Chairman of the Ornithological Society of the Middle East, c/o RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

News and comment

Mike Everett and Robin Prytherch

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

White-tailed Eagles breed again After eight years, during which 52 young White-tailed Eagles *Haliaeetus albicilla* have been released on Rhum, Inner Hebrides, breeding has at last been attempted. Eggs were laid in two nests, but none hatched: a great disappointment to the RSPB staff who found the nests and mounted a watch on them. The failure was almost certainly due to the inexperience of the birds and probably quite typical in any established population of this large raptor. The chances of successful breeding next year must now be very high. These eagles last bred in Britain 67 years ago, in 1916. It is a credit to all concerned in this project, mounted by the NCC in 1975, that this magnificent bird is back in our islands and that so many of those released so far have survived (two-thirds of the 52 released). The latest batch of ten fledglings arrived in Rhum in mid June, after their speedy journey on board an RAF *Nimrod* from Norway. Let us hope that these youngsters mature into a population which contains its own British-bred birds.

Operation Eagle . . . is the name of a two-year undercover investigation into illegal trade in endangered and protected birds, in particular the Bald Eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*, in the U.S.A. Agents of the Fish and Wildlife Service posed as buyers of

native American artefacts such as fans, whistles, head-dresses, rattles and jewellery made from the feathers, beaks and bones of the eagles. In mid June, nine people were arrested and 37 others charged with violating federal laws. They could face fines of up to £1,200 or as much as five years in prison. War bonnets, at £3,000 apiece, fans at £500, and other reproductions of Indian artefacts are sold to buyers in Western Europe, particularly West Germany, but also Britain. This trade is thought to be responsible for the deaths of at least 300 Bald Eagles every year. But the news is not all bad . . .

. . . Bald Eagles up The last ten years have seen a massive increase in Bald Eagle populations throughout the 48 contiguous states of the U.S.A. From an all-time low of 400 pairs in the early 1970s, there are now reckoned to be about 1,200 pairs. The increase (based on fledglings sighted) has been most marked in Florida, with a massive jump of 397% since 1973; about 400 pairs bred there last year. A major cause of the increase must be the ban on DDT, but other factors have also played their part: preservation of eagle habitat, better design of power lines, introduction of captive-bred young into wild nests, stricter enforcement of laws, and a greater public awareness. (*Information from 'New York Times'*)

No rest for Peregrines The fortunes of our Peregrines *Falco peregrinus* are rather like a re-run of the Bald Eagle story. After the successful recovery to a now-healthy population, it is sad to report that nearly 70 nests have been raided this year, so far. The total is likely to be higher than last. The young birds are smuggled out of the country to West Germany, the Middle East and elsewhere. With up to £1,000 for each chick at stake, the raiders are relentless and clever, and obviously undeterred by the present tough penalties. In this area, the 1982 Wildlife and Countryside Act clearly is not working. If the raiders continue to increase their activities, new measures must be brought in.

Parrots returned On 18th July, 20 Yellow-billed Amazons *Amazona collaria* were returned to Jamaica by courtesy of British Airways.

The birds had been seized by HM Customs and Excise officials at Heathrow Airport in April, misdescribed as a consignment of Olive-throated Conures *Aratinga nana*. All were unfledged juveniles destined for the British avicultural market, where they can fetch up to £200 each. All psittacines (except Budgerigar *Melopsittacus undulatus* and Cockatiel *Nymphicus hollandicus*) are now listed on Appendix II to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species and require licences to be granted by both the exporting and the importing countries. Unlike Britain, Jamaica is not a signatory to this convention, but does exercise controls

over wildlife exports and does not allow the export of Yellow-billed Amazons. In this instance, the exporters had been granted a licence by the Jamaican government to export 20 Olive-throated Conures. This consignment had been checked by Jamaican officials before shipment, but the birds had subsequently been exchanged. Despite information received by the RSPB which helped to uncover this smuggling incident, it did not prove possible to prosecute those concerned.

The Yellow-billed Amazon is found only on the island of Jamaica and recent work has shown that the population is declining as its habitat is diminished by cultivation and forestry. Though in no immediate danger of extinction, this parrot is, because of its restricted range, a rare bird.

We hope that these birds will be used by the Jamaican government for a captive-breeding restocking project or released back to the wild. (Contributed by Graham Elliott)

Bird Illustrator of the Year The Press Reception for the presentation of this year's Bird Illustrator of the Year awards was held at The Mall Galleries in London on 15th July (plate 198), coinciding as usual with the Society of Wildlife Artists' annual exhibition. We greatly welcome the continuation of this happy co-operation with the SWLA. The presentation was made by Keith Shackleton, the Society's President, who has also agreed to join Robert Gillmor and Dr J. T. R. Sharrock as the third judge for the 1984 selection.

198. BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR 1983, London, July 1983: left to right, Bruce Pearson (2nd), Robert Gillmor (judge), Martin W. Woodcock (1st), Keith Shackleton (President, Society of Wildlife Artists), Rodney Ingram (3rd), JTRS (judge) and Alan Harris (judge). (The 1983 winner of The Richard Richardson Award, Gary Wright, was unable to attend)

(R. J. Chandler)



Lost: 17 million birds Scientists are visiting the world's largest coral atoll, Christmas Island, to determine what caused the sudden disappearance of its birds. The 17 million birds, of 18 species, were noted 'missing' last November; they have either left the island or perished. Ralph Schreiber of the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles county, who discovered the mysterious disappearance, suspects that the cause may be related to El Niño, a cyclical weather phenomenon in the Pacific that alters wind patterns, salinity, ocean currents and, therefore, the food on which the birds live. (Information from 'Geosphere')

Chew Conference This regional bird-watchers conference, held at Tisbury, Bath, in March 1983, attracted about 70 people from a wide area of the south and west. There were interesting and varied talks on topics such as the recent ank wreck, Pied Flycatchers *Ficedula hypoleuca* in Wales, roof-top nesting gulls *Larus* in Bristol and studies of the Upland Goose *Chelephaga picta* in the Falkland Islands. There were no all-correct entries for the BB mystery photographs competition, but the bottle of champagne was awarded to G. Webber for the closest answer. (Contributed by Dorian Buffery)

Specialist bird-holidays in China The first-ever birding tour to the People's Republic of China was organised by Study China Travel to the country's most northeasterly province, Heilangjiang (Black Dragon River Province), in June and July 1982, with Dr Chris Perrins as guest ornithologist. About 140 species were seen. The second such tour, in April and May 1983, took eight tourists (including Mrs Eileen Parrinder, who saw several Little Ringed Plovers *Charadrius dubius*) not only to two forest locations and one internationally important wetland, Zha Long, where three species of crane nest and three more pause on migration, all in Heilangjiang, but also to the Ever-white Mountain Nature Reserve in Jilin province where the Chinese Merganser *Mergus squamata* nests and has been studied by He Jing Jie, the ornithologist resident there since 1961. Lastly, the party stayed at Beidaihe Beach in Hobei province, made famous by the migration studies of the Danish doctor, Axel Hemmingsen, interned there by the Japanese during 1942-45. Migrant Rufous-bellied Pied Woodpeckers *Dendrocopos hyperythrus* and Chestnut Buntings *Emberiza rutila* turned up at this 'Falsterbo of the Far East', as Hemmingsen's

co-author dubbed the location, *exactly* when the observations of 40 years before would have led one to expect. (Contributed by Jeffery Boswall)

Dr MAO No—not an eminent Chinaman, but our own Malcolm Ogilvie! Malcolm has just gained his PhD for a study on 'The migration of the Teal in Europe based on ringing recoveries'. Anyone who can combine working for a doctorate with holding down a job (even if it is one which may involve thinking about Teal) deserves congratulations-plus. Well done, Malcolm!

Rarities committees get-together in Siberia The bank of the Angara River in Irkutsk was the venue in June for an impromptu symposium of members of Swedish, Finnish and British rarities committees. British member Steve Madge bumped into a party of Scandinavian birders including Lars Jonsson (Sweden), Lasse Laine (Finland) and Lars Svensson (Sweden). Apart from watching some splendid birds together, much interesting discussion took place over the vodka table!

Birding, Swedish style The latest issue of *Vår Fågelvärld* includes this drawing and the advice (so my colleague David Christie informs me): 'Let your binoculars accompany you to the seaside—there is much to look at!' Before you all rush off northwards for your next summer birding trips, it could be worth consulting the article, which lists and maps 44 sites worth visiting for their summer ornithological interest. A section headed 'Bra guider' demonstrates, however, the necessity of learning Swedish to avoid drawing the wrong conclusions: it lists a couple of good bird guides. (Contributed by JTRS)



French Rarities Committee Pierre Yésou informs us of the formation of a 'rarities committee', the Comité National d'Homologation (La Corderie Royale, BP 263, 17305 Rochefort Cedex, France), which will be

pleased to consider any records submitted by visiting British birders. A list of the species concerned is available from Mike Rogers, 195 Vicarage Road, Sunbury-on-Thames, Middlesex TW16 7TP.

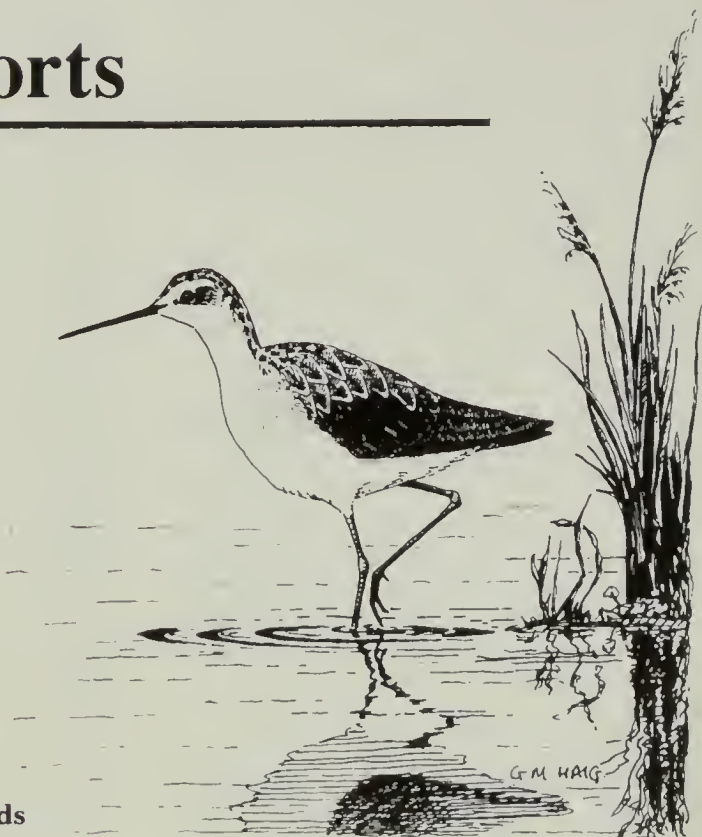
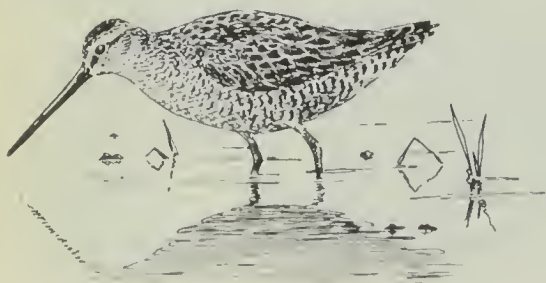
Recent reports

*K. Allsopp and
R. A. Hume*

These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records

Dates in this report refer to July except where stated otherwise.

In contrast to the cool unsettled spring weather, July was one of the hottest on record. A warm anticyclonic area developed over the country at the beginning of the month, declining only at the end. The light winds came mainly from the east, and the severe thunderstorms that affected southern districts at times originated from low-pressure centres which developed over France, and moved north. After the spate of June rarities, early July was rather quiet, but by the end some autumnal movements were evident.



Waders

As usual, the return passage of northern waders started during the month. At Sandwich Bay (Kent), **Whimbrels** *Numenius phaeopus* numbered 46 on 24th and 45 on 27th, and **Common Sandpipers** *Actitis hypoleucos* lived up to their name, with 73 on 27th and 163 on 30th. A **Curlew Sandpiper** *Calidris ferruginea* was present at Spurn (Humber-side) on 27th, and a **Temminck's Stint** *C. temminckii* was found at Minsmere (Suffolk) on 23rd. **Marsh Sandpipers** *Tringa stagnatilis* have been increasingly reported in the last few years, and two further records came from Pennington (Hampshire) on 28th and Holme (Norfolk) from 29th. Another east European passage wader, the **Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Limicola falcinellus*, again occurring more frequently, had featured at Balranald (Western Isles) on 27th and 28th June. July Nearctic waders are probably the non-breeding survivors of previous years' transatlantic flights: **Long-billed Dowitchers** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* turned up at



Tollesbury (Essex) from 17th and near Scarborough (North Yorkshire), a **White-rumped Sandpiper** *Calidris fuscicollis* at Redcar (Cleveland), a **Wilson's Phalarope** *Phalaropus tricolor* at Cley around 10th, and **Pectoral Sandpipers** *C. melanotos* at Tees-side (Cleveland) on 30th, two at Wisbech Sewage-farm (Cambridgeshire) on 24th, and at Stanpit Marsh (Dorset) on 28th.

Of the large wading species, four **Spoon-bills** *Platalea leucorodia* were reported from the increasingly important reserve at Titchwell (Norfolk) on 24th, and a **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* from Strumpshaw Fen (Norfolk) on 21st.

Birds of prey

The sighting of the month was easily the identification of a dark-phase **Booted Eagle** *Hieraaetus pennatus* at Spurn on 28th. Although its breeding range extends to northern France and accidentals have been reported from the Low Countries, this is potentially the first record for these islands. There was also a **Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus* at Lakenheath (Suffolk) around 10th.

Seabirds

Only when the weather cooled off at the end of the month, with the arrival of northerly air, were some movements evident. A **Ring-billed Gull** *Larus delawarensis* was reported from Redcar in late July, and **Sabine's Gulls** *L. sabini* were seen at Titchwell on 1st August and close by at Holme the following day. A few **Long-tailed Skuas** *Stercorarius longicaudus* were also seen inshore along the Norfolk coast in the first week of August. In the West

Country, a **Little Shearwater** *Puffinus assimilis* was the only excitement, being seen off Trevoze Head (Cornwall) on 23rd.

Early passerine dispersal

Apart from a **Tawny Pipit** *Anthus campestris* at St Bees Head (Cumbria) on 5th, all reports occurred at the end of the month. A **Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella cinerea* at Minsmere on 21st was on an exceptional date for this species. Two early **Fieldfares** *Turdus pilaris* arrived on 24th at Spurn, a locality which also reported **Black Redstarts** *Phoenicurus ochruros* on 20th and 21st, and on 30th. A **Dartford Warbler** *Sylvia undata* was trapped in a reedbed at Stanpit Marsh on 28th, surprising the ringers. **Icterine Warblers** *Hippolais icterina*, often early migrants, were reported from Sandwich Bay on 30th and 31st, and along the English south coast two **Melodious Warblers** *H. polyglotta* were found at Portland Bill (Dorset), an **Aquatic Warbler** *Acrocephalus paludicola* at Farlington (Hampshire) and a **Bonelli's Warbler** *Phylloscopus bonelli* at Slapton Ley (Devon), all during the first week of August, when there was also a male **Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla*



flava showing the characteristics of the black-headed race *feldegg* at Cley.

Movements of **Swifts** *Apus apus* at Spurn were reported to be poor compared with previous years. Perhaps the delay in nesting after the poor June weather will also have delayed their departure. A vagrant **Alpine Swift** *A. melba*, however, gave some compensation there on 19th.

Recent rarities decisions

Two records have resulted in the species involved attaining Category A status on the British and Irish list: **Green Heron** *Butorides striatus* at Stone Creek (Humberside) in November and December 1982 (promoted from Category B), and **Little Whimbrel** *Numenius minutus* at Sker Point (Mid Glamorgan) in August-September 1982 (first British record).



Latest news

In mid September, scattering of American waders; Nearctic **Northern Waterthrush** *Seiurus noveboracensis* on Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork), where also **Greenish Warbler**

Phylloscopus trochiloides; **Yellow-breasted Bunting** *Emberiza aureola* there and three or four on Fair Isle, where also **Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* and **Arctic Warbler** *Phylloscopus borealis*.

Reviews

The Birds of Africa. Volume I. By Leslie H. Brown, Emil K. Urban and Kenneth Newman. Academic Press, London, 1982. 521 pages; 28 colour plates; 4 black-and-white plates; many line-drawings and maps. £53.40.

This is a huge book: just as heavy as but even larger than the third volume of *BWP*. There is only one fair way to describe it: it is a magnificent book. The attractive design, large and clear print, and lay-out designed for ease of use all enhance its all-round quality.

This is the first of six volumes (there may be a seventh on the Malagasy region). Unfortunately, its publication came after the death of its major initiator, Leslie Brown; as HRH The Duke of Edinburgh says in his foreword, 'the series will be a monument to Leslie Brown'. Volumes II-IV will be edited by Emil K. Urban, Hilary Fry and Stuart Keith. The series covers all the birds recorded in Africa; a case could be made for excluding those which have occurred only within the Palearctic parts of the continent (a number of species have not been recorded south of the Sahara, for instance), thereby giving either more room for the remaining species or smaller volumes at a lower price. As it is, there are some instances of considerable detail being given on birds which are not truly African but have occurred only as vagrants, for which the researcher would surely seek his information in handbooks covering the areas where the birds are better known. This criticism could, however, be levelled at many handbooks, and I feel sure that the majority of African ornithologists would be in favour of the present treatment.

It would be an unusual book which did not include any errors. It is easy for a reviewer to nit-pick. I do not intend to do so. This is the book to which I shall turn when I seek information on African birds; that is what the authors and editors intended, and that is what they have achieved, with great thoroughness.

Each of the main species has a distribution map. When judging these, it is necessary to bear in mind, first, that the continent of Africa includes such a variety of climates, habitats and bird species that breeding can occur in any month and, secondly, that, for some species of birds, even the nests have never been described. Nevertheless, it is a pity that for many species there is no differentiation between breeding areas and non-breeding areas. Hopefully, this system will be changed for future volumes.

Any major handbook is bound to be judged to a large extent on its illustrations. The 32 plates in this first volume compare favourably with those for similar works. It is a help that only two artists were involved: Martin Woodcock and Peter Hayman. Both deserve congratulations for having achieved portraits which are both accurate and artistically pleasing. With sometimes up to 40 species on a page, the artists had not only the problem of careful illustration, but also that of positioning to allow the maximum size of bird and minimum wasted space, without producing a confusing jumble of images. Martin Woodcock, who was responsible for plates 18-32, covering all the raptors from Osprey to Teita Falcon, has achieved this difficult compromise with very great skill: his birds are large and where they occasionally overlap this does not detract either from the usefulness of the picture or its attractiveness. Peter Hayman, who was responsible for the first 17 plates, covering the species from Ostrich to the ducks, has used a different method, with a large amount of blank space in between his rather smaller portraits. To my eye, this has worked less well and has often resulted in tiny birds on which the details have been lost during printing, through reduction or processing.

Academic Press is not renowned for producing cheap bird books, but this one is value for money, even at its high price, and will justifiably be regarded as indispensable by everyone having any interest in African birds.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

The Barn Owl. By **D. S. Bunn, A. B. Warburton and R. D. S. Wilson.** T. & A. D. Poyser, Calton, 1982. 264 pages; one colour and 31 black-and-white photographs; numerous line-drawings, diagrams and tables. £12.60.

Not long ago, while looking at a recently fledged Barn Owl, my father was struck on the shoulder by one of the adults, receiving two parallel scratches. I know of no recorded instance of a Barn Owl attacking a human being, and I found no mention of such a thing in this book, but that must be just about the only thing *not* recorded there. For this book is a classic of its kind: a full and fascinating account of the life history of an intriguing species, built around the fieldwork of two of the authors, David Bunn and Tony Warburton, with an impressive amount of other information gleaned from other studies and the literature. Robert Wilson has taken on the massive task of the 'literature search', most successfully, and has added a splendid chapter of his own on the folklore of Barn Owls.

Whether you are an owl addict, a more normal diurnal birder, a twitcher, or an armchair naturalist, you should read this book: it will fascinate you, entertain you and leave you a lot more knowledgeable than you were before. You will also enjoy the photographs and, particularly, Ian Willis's illustrations; and you will certainly not be disappointed by the layout and 'feel' of the book: it is of the usual high standard that we now take for granted whenever we see the name of Poyser on the dustjacket.

I hope that many farmers will read it too. It has a lot to say on Barn Owl conservation, with many practical suggestions. Farmers are notably sympathetic when asked about Barn Owls, almost instinctively so following their long and generally friendly relationship with the species: they will benefit from reading the book and, consequently, this will help Barn Owls. I was pleased to see such a strong conservation message coming across as a result of the authors' work, but, with so many less thoughtful people jumping on the bandwagon of captive breeding and release schemes, I was disappointed that more was not said on the environmental considerations which should come first. A clear warning could have been given that no amount of 'restocking the wild' will be of any benefit to Barn Owls if there is nowhere for them to hunt and nest and if the release areas are contaminated by agricultural chemicals. A simple point, perhaps, and one that the authors clearly understand, but I sometimes wonder whether it has been grasped by some of the growing number of people dabbling in Barn Owls (and other species) nowadays.

MIKE EVERETT

Gone Birding. By **Bill Oddie.** Methuen, London, 1983. 180 pages; many black-and-white plates and line-drawings. £6.95.

For a start, this is a very well-written book, with wit, style, and readability. The author's previous volume, *Bill Oddie's Little Black Bird Book*, dealing with the mystique of twitching, is already a classic; its humour hits home time and again, so that, if it is your humour, you will guffaw and collapse with mirth on almost every page. *Gone Birding* is much subtler, so that I read it with a perpetual smile, but only seldom fell off my chair. It is not for dipping into (which has nothing to do with dipping out), but should be read from beginning to end.

This is Bill Oddie's ornitho-autobiography (it hardly touches on his Cambridge *Footlights* and subsequent showbiz career), up to some ten years ago; the next volume, we are promised, will bring us up to date. Four areas dominate the book: the West Midlands (particularly Bartley Reservoir), Monk's House, Dungeness and Cley. I don't know the first two, but everything about the last two rings bell after bell: Bill Oddie has captured the atmosphere of both perfectly, with immense humour, and with obvious truthfulness. He is, for instance, very caustic in his comments on two very well known personalities (you'll have to read the book to find out who!) and their effects on his youthful development (one nearly put him off birding for ever), but it is done with sufficient tinge of affection that I feel sure neither will take too much offence (perhaps they'll even be proud to have retained their reputations as strict disciplinarians of uppety-schoolboy novice birdwatchers).

If you know the West Midlands, Monk's House, Dungeness or Cley; or if you have ever worked your own 'local patch'; or if you were birdwatching in the 1950s or 1960s; or if you enjoyed *BOLBBB*; or if you have ever been a ringer; or if you have ever been a teenage birdwatcher; or if you don't take your birding too seriously; or if you take your birding very seriously indeed: READ THIS BOOK.

If you have ever gone birding, get *Gone Birding*.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

A Field Guide to the Birds of Japan. Text by Wild Bird Society of Japan; illustrations by Shinji Takano; editor-in-chief Koichiro Sonobe. Wild Bird Society of Japan, Tokyo, 1982. 336 pages; many colour illustrations. £13.10.

The publication of this excellent guide dealing with 524 species (plus 13 escapees) finally paves the way for a serious interest in eastern Asia amongst travelling European birders. The only previous field-guide approach to Japanese birds in English, Yoshimaro Yamashina's *Birds in Japan* (1974), is difficult to obtain and treats only a selection of well-known species. This book deals with all species recorded in Japan, including offshore islands, up to March 1982.

Following standard field-guide format, the customary explanatory introduction and checklist are followed by Koichiro Sonobe's succinct 'Identifying birds with this book' outlining the principles and pitfalls of field identification in five simple paragraphs. The order is based on Peterson's (1980) *A Field Guide to the Birds East of the Rockies*, which grouped families of birds together according to their shared visual and behavioural characteristics. In this case, whether one cares to view birds as 'swimmers' or 'aerialists' is perhaps a matter of taste. The complete novice may save a little time in making identifications as a result of this spurious classification, but assuming that the fascination of birds takes root, such a benefit will be short-lived. Conversely, any reader with a seasoned thumb will experience nothing but exasperation in failing to locate some families where expected, and will be forced to backtrack to the quick-reference pictures on the inside covers.

Finally, an 11-page 'Birdwatching guide for Japan' details some prime localities, from sub-tropical Irimote and Ishigaki in the Ryu-Kyu islands to Shunkunitai and Cape Ochiishi on sub-arctic Hokkaido, perhaps at their best during this island's bitter winters. In total, 28 sites are mapped and briefly outlined. Those providing facilities for education, in the context of a well-managed reserve, are given some prominence. This could mislead the foreign birder, as such reserves—frequently close to major urban centres—often offer little more than 'standard fare' and are, in some cases, not worthy of a visit if one has limited time and money. Should such an emphasis ultimately strengthen the dismal level of environmental concern in Japan, it will be amply justified. There are, however, some surprising omissions. The volcanic wilderness of Akan National Park (Hokkaido) and Nikko National Park, perhaps the best area of high altitude marsh and lakes in central Honshu, less than five hours from Tokyo and once described as 'the birding paradise of Japan', get no mention. Nor does the excellent Daisetsuzan National Park in central Hokkaido, where the forests, distinctly Siberian in composition, probably hold all of the island's boreal and sub-arctic specialities (including the endemic Three-toed Woodpecker *Picoides tridactylus inouyei*, occurring only there). It is, however, unlikely that a foreign birder, starting in late winter and visiting the sites given in a sensible order over four months, would fail to find most of Japan's breeding birds.

Shinji Takano's illustrations are the finest aspect of the book. The only available portraits in a few cases, they seem fresh and alive. Occasionally the colours are a little fierce, but the illustrations are attractive, large enough, well laid out and mostly accurate. Certainly there are oversights: the pale panel shown by the wing-coverts of a flying Pintail Snipe *Gallinago stenura* is not shown; the bill of Saunders's Gull *Larus saundersi* is too thin; the wing bar of Ijima's Warbler *Phylloscopus ijimae* is omitted; the shape of Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii* is wrong. To dwell on these would, however, be to lose sight of the artist's more thoughtful approach to the problems of field identification than that found in many previous field guides. It is especially pleasing to see juvenile plumages of waders—with some attention to feather pattern—portrayed at last. Winter plumages of male buntings, eclipse plumages of male ducks, and distinctive races (of wagtails in particular) are well painted. The portraits of strange races—little known to us in Europe—of familiar Palearctic birds are most useful: the grey-breasted race of Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula cineracea*, the chestnut-bellied Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius philippensis*, and the black-headed phase of male Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus spilonotus*, for example. And how many observers in the field in Southeast Asia include dark-phase Grey-faced Buzzard *Buteo indicus* in their raptor-identification options? The artist's attempt to show a wide range of plumages thus solves many potential identification problems.

The text is rather brief: sufficient space is available for only a few sentences, though additional details are given to aid distinction between similar species. There are two major failings. First, little attention is paid to the importance of vocalisations in identification: only in

a few cases are calls described at all. Perhaps this is just as well: there must be great difficulty in transcribing calls, as perceived and spoken in Japanese, to a set of letters in English. It is also possible that some of the calls given have been inadequately researched: most books describe a three-note call for Little Whimbrel *Numenius minutus*, here given as two notes. The second failing concerns taxonomy and nomenclature. Ornithologists in Europe might have been saved confusion had the species treatment in the text followed the *List of Recent Holarctic Bird Species* (Voous 1973 & 1977). Here, for example, no distinction is made between the genera *Tringa* and *Actitis* or *Cichlopasser*, *Zoothera* and *Turdus*; the common name Caspian Plover *Charadrius asiaticus* is used to refer to another species, Oriental Plover *C. veredus*, though perhaps they are considered conspecific by the Japanese: how are we to know? Again, 'Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*' ignores Japanese Quail *C. japonica*. Accepting Voous, some species which might profitably have been so treated are not.

Distribution maps are presented covering the range of each species in a considerably broader context than that of Japan itself: China/eastern Asia or Southeast Asia/Indonesia, where appropriate. Breeding and wintering ranges are clearly shown. The maps are extremely valuable, given the high price and often limited availability of other works mapping distributions in this area. For the serious student of Asian birds, they alone are sufficient justification for the purchase of this book. Occasionally we are misled: the colour of printing for the breeding and wintering ranges of Pacific Diver [*Gavia pacifica*—here treated as a species—is reversed. The breeding range of Western Sandpiper *Calidris mauri* extends into northeast Siberia, but is not shown to do so. Other unfortunate mistakes have slipped through: Copper Pheasant *Symaticus soemmerringii* is not a *Phasianus*, and there is no map for Japanese Accentor *Prunella rubida*. Sadly, five species will never need a map . . . they are extinct.

With this in mind, the book is a monument to the splendid efforts that the author panel and the Wild Bird Society of Japan have made to stimulate interest in the birds of their country. Might such a commendable achievement help prevent further extinctions? Pages of critical quibbles cannot hide the fact that this field guide compares favourably with any of its predecessors and is well worth its price. Most of us will want to own a copy. Extremely well bound, attractively designed, with a detailed map on the inside back covers, it ably satisfies the needs of any foreigner on a birding trip and must surely increase conservation-awareness in Japan itself. (In this context, it is difficult not to admire the compilers' choice of Japanese Crested Ibis *Nipponia nippon* for the cover illustration: given the recent history of the species, this smacks of bold optimism.)

Let us wish them luck, for it is high time that the much lauded traditional Japanese reverence for the natural world ceased to find exclusive manifestation in the realm of art and became apparent in that of economic behaviour.

RODNEY P. MARTINS

A Natural History of British Birds. By Eric Simms. Illustrated by Robert Gillmor. J. M. Dent & Sons, London, 1983. 367 pages; 16 colour plates; 137 line-drawings. £12.95.

It is perhaps surprising, in view of the recent proliferation of books on 'birdy' subjects, that it is difficult to bring to mind any other book which provides the amateur ornithologist with a good grounding in bird biology in such a painless and pleasant manner. The only similar book I can recall was *Bird* by Louis & Lois Darling 20 or 30 years ago and long out of print now.

The present book is in no way a tex-book. The author, Eric Simms, well known for his books in the 'New Naturalist' series and for his radio broadcasts, writes in an informal prose style. There are no graphs, complicated statistical tables or scientific jargon to tax the brain. It is a book which is easy to dip into, the chapters being relatively short and complete in themselves. The first chapter traces the evolutionary development of our modern birds, the second shows how present-day bird families are related and distributed worldwide. In the chapter 'Birds and the British Isles' the author indicates the way climatic changes have affected vegetation and thence the population levels of many species over a period of time. He provides extensive lists of habitat types and the birds likely to be found there. Further chapters cover all aspects of bird biology, from body structure and plumage, 'The quest for food', 'The voices of birds' and 'How birds behave', to 'Nuptials and breeding' and 'Nests and families'. There are many fascinating, often amusing, anecdotes and snippets of information of the type

useful in after-dinner conversation. Did you know that a Hawfinch can exert a force of 95 lb in order to split a cherry stone, or that a Woodpigeon has been found with 163 peas in its crop?

Other chapters have intriguing titles: 'Birds at night', 'Death and survival', 'Birds and Man' and 'Birds in folklore and art'. A month-by-month review of migration in Britain is included in the chapter 'Bird migrants and ringing', and the classic birdwatching areas of the country are listed by habitat in 'Where to watch birds'. A chapter, 'Birdwatching', provides useful advice on all aspects of the hobby, from selecting books and binoculars to sound recording and making nest-boxes. A full list of British and Irish birds and their status is given and there is a bibliography under chapter headings.

The numerous line-drawings and sixteen colour paintings by Robert Gillmor are excellent, being both instructive and decorative. The drawing of a Stone-curlew 'conversing' with its chick just before it hatches has particular appeal for me. Is there just the hint of a chuckle behind the pen?

The book has a thoroughly pleasing appearance, the type-face being easy on the eye and the paper good quality and white. It even smells good! I can recommend it to all birdwatchers who, having got to grips with identification, feel that they still know very little about the lives of the birds they see.

HILARY BURN

The Technique of Bird Photography. By John Warham. Butterworth Group, London & Boston, 1983. 4th edn. 287 pages; 32 colour plates; 56 black-and-white plates; 25 line illustrations. £18.50.

This is a completely re-written version of a book that has been widely used since it was first published in 1956. The author is both a bird photographer and a successful professional ornithologist whose wide experience in both fields is apparent throughout the book.

The scope of the book is broad, and bird photographers of all grades of experience and expertise will learn from it. There are 14 chapters, commencing with a short introduction and an all-too-brief history of bird photography which includes two or three photographs dating back to the 19th Century. Throughout the remainder of the book, the tacit assumption is made that the reader has a basic photographic knowledge. The beginner will need to refer to a basic text, if, for example, he needs to know how best to process film to minimise grain.

A major feature of the book is that it considers the making of films as well as still photography, and the chapters on the choice of cameras, lenses and accessories cover comprehensively both still and movie equipment. The emphasis is on 35-mm stills and Super 8 cine, but larger format equipment of both types is not forgotten. Generally, the manufacturers of specific makes of equipment are not given, but occasionally the makers of particular items are mentioned, and one of the several valuable appendices is both a bibliography and a list of useful addresses.

The various aspects of bird photography are discussed: the use of hides (with many useful examples and ideas), nest photography (both above and below ground), stalking, flight photography (both still and cine), 'wait-and-see' work, the use of bait, remote control, play-back tape, the use of flash, filming with artificial light, and so forth. This section of the book is a veritable mine of useful information, tips and wrinkles. I must, however, take issue with the statement that waders are 'often fairly tame' and are thus suitable subjects for stalking; my experience is that this happens all too rarely, at least with most of the western Palearctic species.

The author's scientific background comes out in useful chapters on expedition photography (again specifically including film making) and photography in the field for scientific purposes.

The final chapters discuss the aesthetic ideals, using a few well-chosen pictures, and the ethics of bird photography. The last is a short chapter summarising the basic rules followed by responsible bird photographers, a topic that the author raises throughout the book wherever relevant.

The book as a whole is illustrated with well-chosen photographs, a large proportion of which have been taken by the author and which clearly demonstrate the author's qualifications. Accompanying each is an informative caption, so that each picture both illustrates and amplifies points made in the text.

The book will be a valuable addition to any bird photographer's library. My only complaint is that the price seems a little high; but, after all, it is no more than the cost of three or four rolls of colour film.

R. J. CHANDLER

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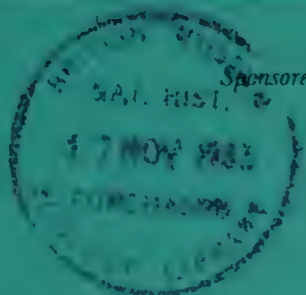
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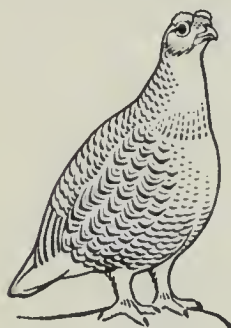
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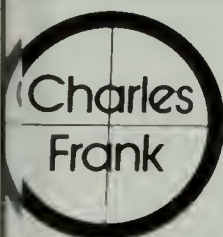
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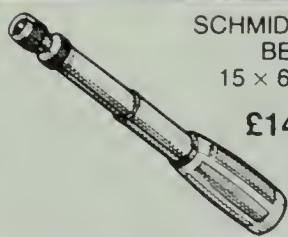
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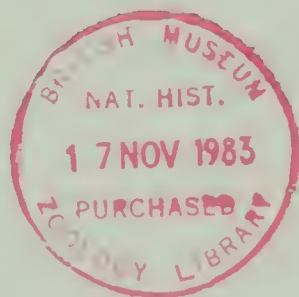
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British Birds

VOLUME 76 NUMBER 11 NOVEMBER 1983



Sponsorship

We are delighted to announce that **Zeiss West Germany** has agreed to sponsor the Rarities Committee for at least one year, and perhaps for longer; naturally, we hope that this support will become annual.

It is very fitting that **Zeiss West Germany** should be the sponsors of the annual summary of rare birds in Britain, since the readers of *British Birds* gave *Zeiss West* 10 × 40 B Dialyt binoculars their votes as (1) the most popular binoculars in 1982 (the model most frequently owned by knowledgeable birdwatchers); (2) the most highly rated binoculars (on a performance-scale rating of 1 to 6, *Zeiss West* 10 × 40 B achieved the remarkable average of 5.83); and (3) the top binoculars for 1983 (those which would be bought again by their present owners or to which owners of most other models would like to change) (*Brit. Birds* 76: 155-161). One needs only to look around a group of birders watching a rarity to see the make of binocular which is most popular with those birdwatchers who are satisfied with nothing but the best.

As the number of observers increases, so the number of rare birds seen, identified and reported also increases. In turn, this necessitates larger and larger annual reports, even with the 'commoner rarities' being dropped (reluctantly) from the Committee's consideration (see *Brit. Birds* 75: 337-338). This very welcome sponsorship from **Zeiss West Germany** will benefit ALL readers of *British Birds*. We shall now worry less when a bumper crop of rarities necessitates an oversize issue of *BB* to accommodate the report, and shall not be in the position (as in the past) of sometimes having to contemplate extra-small issues to compensate for the extra-large one containing the 'Rarities report'.

On the subject of sponsorship, we should also like to reiterate our gratitude to Matthew Gloag & Son Ltd, proprietors of **The Famous Grouse** Scotch whisky, for their continued sponsorship of our 'Bird Photograph of the Year' competition, which enables us to include the year's outstanding colour photographs within *BB*.

Eds



Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 1982

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*Michael J. Rogers and the Rarities Committee
with comments by K. E. Vinicombe*

This is the twenty-fifth report of the Rarities Committee. Excluding Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*, about 880 records have been accepted for 1982, an acceptance rate of 86%. About 100 records for 1982 are still under consideration, as well as a few for earlier years, including American Wigeons *Anas americana* in autumn 1981, several Gyrfalcons *Falco rusticolus*, and Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* in Norfolk in October 1979. The Committee is also currently completing reviews of the records of Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*, Yellow Wagtails *M. flava* of the black-headed race *feldegg*, Greenish Warblers *Phylloscopus trochiloides* and Two-barred Crossbills *Loxia leucoptera*. The large number of reports of Ring-billed Gulls *Larus delawarensis* in 1981 and 1982 has resulted in delays in assessment: this species is held over until next year's report. One batch of records, all from northwest England, has been inadvertently subject to delay during circulation to the Committee, and we apologise to the observers concerned for the omission of their records this year.

The year 1982 will be well-remembered for the exceptional number of additions to the British and Irish List. Of records for 1982 and previous years, three have already been accepted by the BOURC, Hudsonian Godwit *Limosa haemastica*, Little Whimbrel *Numenius minutus* and Pacific Swift *Apus pacificus*, and several other claims are still under consideration, including Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum*, Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis*, Long-toed Stint *C. subminuta*, Grey-tailed/Wandering Tattler *Heteroscelus*, South Polar Skua *Stercorarius maccormicki*, Chimney Swift *Chaetura pelagica*, Northern Mockingbird *Mimus polyglottos*, White-crowned Black Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga*, Varied Thrush *Zoothera naevia*, Marmora's Warbler *Sylvia sarda* and Savannah Sparrow *Ammodramus sandwichensis*.

D. J. Britton, who conceived the idea of including running species-totals, and who compiled them in our last six reports and wrote the species comments for the last two, has this year handed over both these tasks to K. E. Vinicombe. We are very grateful to DJB for his past contributions, and to KEV for agreeing to take over these responsibilities.

Irish records are adjudicated by the Irish Records Panel and the Northern Ireland Bird Records Committee, and we are grateful for permission to include details of accepted records in the species comments, and to the respective secretaries, Kieran Grace and Mrs P. M. Vizard, for supplying them, thus providing a complete review of rare birds in Great Britain

and Ireland. Roger Long and Trevor Copp have liaised over Channel Islands rarity records, which are now adjudicated by the Rarities Committee, and we are grateful for their co-operation: details of accepted records are listed in the species comments, but not included in the running totals, which are for the geographical unit of Britain and Ireland.

We are again grateful to photographers who have submitted pictures of rarities, a selection of which enhances this report. Any photographs, even those of insufficient quality for publication, are invariably of great assistance in the speedy assessment of records: we urge that they are always submitted along with written evidence; indeed, for some tricky cases, inclusion of photographic evidence is essential.

We again wish to encourage observers to submit drawings of the rarities which they observe. These need not be artistically expert to be of great value in the assessment process. Some examples of sketches submitted with records are included here, not merely as decorations, but to illustrate their usefulness.

We wish to express our gratitude for the ready support given to the Rarities Committee by observers, county and regional recorders, and bird observatories, without which this report would not be as complete and accurate as it is. We also acknowledge the co-operation of the BTO, the RSPB and the Nature Conservancy Council. For readily given assistance and advice on various topics, we thank the Bolton, British, Coventry, Norwich and Royal Scottish Museums, as well as P. R. Colston, A. R. Dean, Jon Dunn, Peter Harrison, Robert Hudson, Guy McCaskie, John Marchant, Killian Mullarney, Dr M. A. Ogilvie, A. J. Prater, A. Pym, Lars Svensson and Pierre Yésou. The sponsorship of the work of the Rarities Committee by Zeiss West Germany (see page 475) is a very welcome new development.

Records should be sent to the Secretary, Michael J. Rogers, 195 Vicarage Road, Sunbury-on-Thames, Middlesex TW16 7TP, preferably via the appropriate county or regional recorder. A copy of the list of species considered by the Committee (note that ten species were removed from the list at the end of 1982, see *Brit. Birds* 75: 337-338), copies of the Rarities Committee Record Form (which should be used, or its format followed, when submitting reports), and a fact sheet setting out the constitution and aims of the Committee, and the procedures followed when considering records, can all be obtained from the Secretary. PJJG

Systematic list of accepted records

The principles and procedure followed in considering records were explained in the 1958 report (*Brit. Birds* 53: 155-158). The systematic list is set out in the same way as in the 1980 report (75: 482-533). The following points show the basis on which the list has been compiled.

- (i) The details included for each record are
 - (1) county; (2) locality; (3) number of birds if more than one, and age and sex if known (in the case of spring and summer records, however, the age is normally given only where the bird concerned was not in adult plumage); (4) if trapped or found dead, and where specimen is stored, if known; (5) date(s); and (6) observer(s) up to three in number, in alphabetical order. In accordance with our declared policy (see *Brit. Birds* 68: 1-4), the new county names have been used, and observers are asked to bear this in mind when submitting records.

(ii) In general, this report is confined to records which are regarded as certain, and 'probables' are not included. In the case of the very similar Long-billed *Limnodromus scolopaceus* and Short-billed Dowitchers *L. griseus*, however, we are continuing to publish indeterminable records, and this also applies to observations of pratincoles *Glareola* and of such difficult groups as albatrosses *Diomedea* and frigatebirds *Fregata*.

(iii) The sequence of species, vernacular names and scientific nomenclature follow *The 'British Birds' List of Birds of the Western Palearctic* (1978). Any sight records of subspecies (including those of birds trapped

and released) are normally referred to as 'showing the characters' of the race concerned.

(iv) The three numbers in brackets after each species' name refer respectively to the totals in Britain and Ireland (excluding those 'At sea') (1) to the end of 1957, (2) for the period since the formation of the Rarities Committee in 1958, but excluding (3) the current year. A detailed breakdown of the figures for previous years is held by the honorary secretary.

(v) The world breeding range is given in brackets at the beginning of each species comment.

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* (18, 61, 4)

Shetland Bunisdale, Mainland, 14th February (B. P. Walker), possibly same as individual off Whalsay to 24th March (see 1981 Shetland below). Off Wedder Holm, Unst, adult, 13th May (R. J. Tulloch), possibly same as Unst individual, 17th May 1981 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 484). Quendale, possibly immature, 18th May (Dr J. N. Darroch, Sir R. Erskine-Hill, Mrs A. North Lewis).

Yorkshire, North Scarborough, adult, 3rd January (R. H. Appleby, M. Williams *et al.*).

1981 Shetland Oll Whalsay, 21st December to 24th March 1982 (Dr B. Marshall, N. Poleson, W. Simpson), possibly same as Bunisdale, Mainland, individual, 1982; see above, and winter 1980/81 individual (*Brit. Birds* 75: 484).

(Arctic Russia, Siberia and Alaska) Some typical records, though it is difficult to be sure exactly how many individuals were involved in Shetland.

Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophris* (2, 21, 0)

Shetland Hermaness, Unst, 14th February to 10th September (per D. Coutts) (plate 199).

(Southern oceans) An October record off St Ives, Cornwall, is still under consideration. Another early arrival by the Hermaness bird. It is now 11 years since it took up residence there among the Gannets *Sula bassana*.

199. Adult Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophris*, Shetland, June 1982 (*Dennis Coutts*)



Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea* (a few, 20,464, 41)**Cornwall** Porthgwarra, eleven, 10th July; one, 11th August; two, 12th (H. P. K. Robinson).**Humberside** Spurn, 10th July (N. A. Bell, J. Cudworth, C. & Mrs J. Massingham).**Kent** Foreness, 9th January (D. C. Gilbert, F. Solly, M. P. Sutherland).**Norfolk** Cley, 5th September (N. Borrow, C. Wilkins). Holme, 6th September (K. B. Shepherd).**Orkney** Brough of Birsay, 27th August (E. J. Williams).**Scilly** St Mary's, 26th September (D. N. Bakewell, Dr R. C. Brace *et al.*). St Martin's, 11th October (G. G. Williams).**1981 Humberside** Flamborough Head, 15th August (K. Rotherham).**1981 Norfolk** Hunstanton, 22nd August (A. R. Kitson, R. F. Porter).**1981 Strathclyde** Ailsa Craig, Ayr, 11th July (I. P. Gibson, B. Zonfrillo).**1981 Sussex, West** Worthing, 3rd May (G. J. Fox, Dr J. A. Newnham).**1981 Yorkshire, North** Filey Brigg, 9th August (P. J. Dunn, M. J. Grumwell, H. J. Whitehead).

(East Atlantic and Mediterranean) Also, 21 off Cape Clear, Co. Cork: two on 5th August, one on 9th, five on 10th, one on 12th, two on 17th, four on 18th, one on 28th, one on 29th and four on 10th September. Also, off the Channel Islands, two, Passage de la D  route, 12 km south of Jersey, on 12th September. After 17,247 in 1980 and 1,500 in 1981 (*Brit. Birds* 74: 455; 75: 484), an abrupt return to normal in 1982. The mid-winter Kent record is not without precedent: one was found dead at Salthouse, Norfolk, on 29th January 1966 and one was seen off South Bishop Lighthouse, Dyfed, on 22nd February 1976 (*Brit. Birds* 60: 312; 70: 413).

American Bittern *Botaurus lentiginosus* (50, 8, 0)**Gwent** Magor, first seen 29th October 1981 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 485), to at least 3rd January.**Strathclyde** Kilmacolin, Renfrew, first seen 4th November 1981 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 485), to 9th January.

(North America) The premature disappearance of these two individuals was no doubt related to the onset of some severe freezing weather.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* (150, 136, 0)**1981 Cambridgeshire** Over,   , freshly dead, 8th June, now at Department of Zoology, University of Cambridge (Dr C. J. Cadbury).

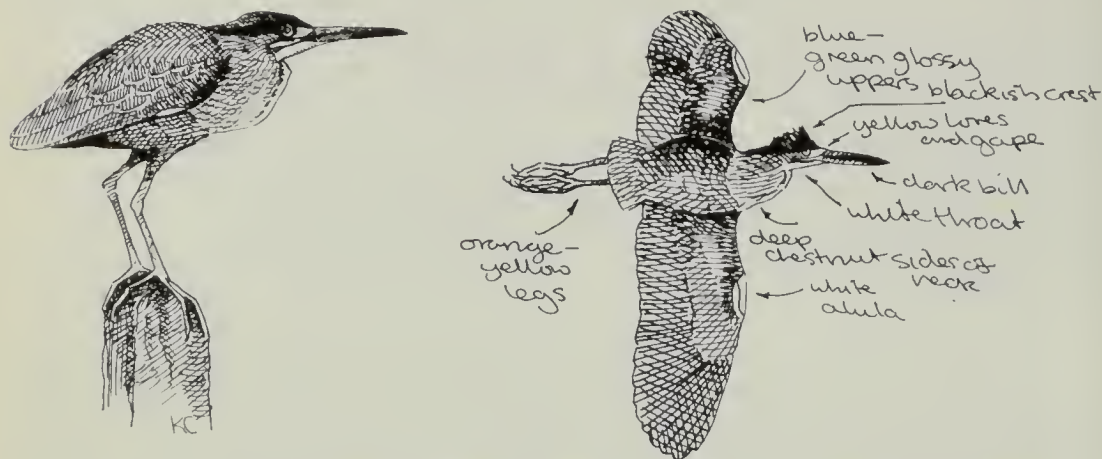
(West Eurasia, Africa and Australia) With only five records in the last three years, this species' status has suffered a distinct down-turn.

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* (165, 119, 5)**Dumfries & Galloway** Near Annan, first-winter, 31st December to 5th April 1983 (M. Bell, D. R. Moore, J. Thompson *et al.*).**Kent** Sandwich Bay, juvenile, 23rd October (J. H. van der Dol).**Lancashire** Skerton Weir, juvenile, 25th October to 26th November (R. Humby, R. I. Kinley, P. J. Marsh *et al.*).**Norfolk** Briston, adult, 15th December to at least 25th January (R. W. Robinson *et al.*), but almost certainly escape.**Orkney** Kirkwall, adult, 23rd May (W. S. Hewison, Mr & Mrs R. Miller); presumed same, Orphir, 24th (I. J. & Mrs J. Cromarty *et al.*).**Tyne & Wear** Washington, juvenile, 28th September (K. Ferry, B. Gadsby, A. Temple).**1981 Hampshire** Adult, 4th May (*Brit. Birds* 75: 486), was at Titchfield Abbey, not as stated.

(South Eurasia, Africa and the Americas) The Norfolk bird has not been included in the totals.

Green Heron *Butorides striatus* (1, 0, 1)

Humberside Stone Creek, 27th November (possibly since 13th or 14th) to 2nd December (P. T. Bell, C. & G. Featherstone, A. G. Ross *et al.*). (*Brit Birds* 76: plates 40: 41; see also figs. 1 & 2).



Figs. 1 & 2. Green Heron *Butorides striatus*, Humberside, November 1982 (Keith Colcombe)

(North, Central and northern South America) The first British record was one which was shot near St Austell, Cornwall, on 27th October 1889 (*Brit. Birds* 65: 424-427). It seemed inevitable that it would re-occur one day, but nobody could have predicted that, when it did, it would share a drainage ditch with a Great White Egret *Egretta alba*!

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* (95, 18, 3)

Devon Otter Estuary, 2nd June (J. C. Nicholls, A. S. Vials).

Dorset Radipole, 5th July to 8th August (M. Cade, Dr G. P. Green, D. T. Ireland *et al.*).

Sussex, West Mannings Heath, 16th to 19th June (R. Hardwick).

(South Europe, southwest Asia and Africa) For many people, the immaculate and obliging Radipole bird will stand out as one of the real highlights of 1982. It is interesting to compare the similarity in the status of this species in Britain and Ireland and in France, outside its main breeding areas in the Camargue and the Dombes. In both countries, there were numerous records before the First World War, but very few between then and the mid 1960s (for example, none in France between 1940 and 1965). Since then, however, there has been a definite upsurge, with 18 in Britain and 25 in France, culminating in the probable breeding at the Lac de Grand-Lieu, Loire Atlantique, in 1981, mentioned in the last report (*Brit. Birds* 75: 486). The French 'extralimital' records involved mainly short-staying non-adults, mostly in May and June (*L'Oiseau* 52: 335-346).

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* (23, 257, 14)

Cheshire Sandbach, 16th May (I. Mumford).

Cornwall See Devon/Cornwall.

Devon/Cornwall Goland, 20th August (M. Bevan); same, Tamar and Lynher Estuaries area and St John's Lake, 1th September to 11th October (J. M. Randall, R. Smaldon, S. Westcott *et al.*).

Devon Pustinch, R. Yealm, 15th May (J. M. Glatworthy *et al.*).

Dorset Radipole, 7th June (M. Cade, D. T. Ireland); presumed same, Lodmoor and Langton Herring, 16th to 18th (M. Cade, Dr G. P. Green *et al.*), and Brownsea Island, 27th to at least early August (M. Constantine, Dr G. P. Green *et al.*).

- Dyfed** Ynys-hir, 20th April (J. Chester, C. Hurford, R. I. Thorpe *et al.*). Newport, Pembrokeshire, 26th to 27th April (A. R. P. East, Miss Lewis Smith *et al.*).
Glamorgan, West Three Cliffs Bay, Gower, 14th May (I. F. Tew).
Hampshire Fleet Pond, 22nd April (T. M. J. Doran, L. S. Walton *et al.*).
Leicestershire Eye Brook Reservoir, 5th June (N. W. Hagley *et al.*).
Lothian Aberlady Bay, 14th May (P. R. Gordon).
Suffolk Benacre, 20th to 23rd June (B. G. Brown, A. C. Easton, R. V. A. Marshall *et al.*).
Sussex, East Weir Wood Reservoir, 8th to 9th May (N. J. Donnithorne, J. W. Houghton *et al.*).
1980 Northumberland Cresswell Pond and area, 15th June (*Brit. Birds* 75: 488), first observer was M. J. Lovett, not as stated.
1981 Cornwall Gweek, 2nd to 9th October (K. J. & Mrs L. J. Hall, S. C. Hutchings, J. P. Martin *et al.*).

(South Eurasia, Africa and Australia) Also, two in Ireland, at Inchdoney, Co. Cork, from May until early November, and at North Slob, Co. Wexford, on 1st June. Another reasonably good year. Finders of Little Egrets should perhaps bear in mind the remote possibility of the occurrence of Western Reef Heron *E. gularis*, which has recently been seen in at least four European countries (*Brit. Birds* 74: 260; 75: 25, 569; 76: 272), no doubt much to the dismay of their national records committees.

Great White Egret *Egretta alba* (10, 12, 2)

- Gwynedd** Penmaenpool, Merioneth, 21st October to at least 10th November (F. A. Currie, R. Q. Skeen, P. Wright *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 76: plates 18 & 200).
Humberside Stone Creek, 13th to 30th November (D. Giddings, C. Harvatt *et al.*).
1981 Clwyd Gronant, 29th May (P. Douglas, R. Handley, M. Jones).

(Almost cosmopolitan, extremely local in Europe) Unrecorded from 1952 to 1973, there have now been 13 since, correlated with the recent colonisation of the Netherlands. The peak month has been May, with four records, but two have turned up in April, three in June and one each in July and August. This year's records, therefore, fall well outside this period and may add credence to the suggestions that (a) they might refer to the same individual and (b) they are more likely to refer to the American race

200. Great White Egret *Egretta alba*, Gwynedd, October 1982 (*Peter Antrobus*)



E.a.egretta, particularly in view of the Humberside bird's association with the Green Heron *Butorides striatus* (page 480). It may also be relevant to add that the only late autumn record prior to 1958 was also in a western locality, at Helston, Cornwall, from 28th September to 20th October 1948. The Committee has so far been unable to reach any firm conclusions over racial identity, or indeed whether one or two birds were involved in these records; further photographs of either individual would therefore be most welcome.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* (90, 318, 15)

Cambridgeshire Ouse Washes, adult, 22nd May (R. C. Murfitt, D. J. Weaver).

Glamorgan, West Oxwich, adult, 30th May to 5th June (D. G. & R. H. Davies *et al.*).

Hereford & Worcester Upton Warren, adult, 5th May (S. M. Whitehouse *et al.*).

Kent Dungeness, adult, 27th May (L. J. Davenport).

Lothian Aberlady Bay, immature, 6th April (P. R. Gordon).

Norfolk Horsey Mere, immature, 18th September (A. J. L. Smith *et al.*).

Orkney Widewall Bay, adult, 2nd to 5th August (C. J. Booth, Mrs R. McCutcheon *et al.*).

Somerset Sutton Bingham Reservoir, immature, 13th May (M. A. Hallett).

Suffolk Minsmere, adult, 27th May to at least 6th June (Dr C., D. K. & T. K. Bradshaw, S. M. Dean, M. R. Morley *et al.*); two juveniles, 26th September (D. Croxson, G. J. Jobson *et al.*).

Surrey Beddington Sewage-farm, adult, 11th April (J. Bedford, D. H. Hatton *et al.*).

Sussex, West Near Arundel, juvenile, 31st July (K. Beynon-Tinker). Bognor Regis, adult, 30th August (E. D. Lloyd).

1972 Suffolk Minsmere, immature, 2nd August (*Brit. Birds* 75: 489) was first-summer and present since at least 24th July (A. H. Davis, K. E. Vinicombe *et al.*).

1977 Kent Dungeness, 11th April (*Brit. Birds* 73: 496), withdrawn by observer.

1980 Essex See 1980 Suffolk below.

1980 Suffolk Lamarsh, immature, 2nd to at least 6th September (*Brit. Birds* 75: 489), locality is on Essex/Suffolk boundary and record relates to both counties.

1981 Berkshire Beenham, immature, 9th August (J. A. Lucas).

1981 Kent Fordwich, adult, 18th to 28th April (*Brit. Birds* 75: 488), again, 2nd May (T. A. Guyatt, M. J. Palmer *et al.*). Cliffe, first-summer, 15th July (D. Hale *et al.*).

1981 Norfolk Cley, immature, 21st to 22nd May (S. R. Bierley, J. Pearson).

1981 Scilly St Mary's, adult, 3rd May (S. P. Evison, B. R. Field), probably same as Tresco adult, 10th (*Brit. Birds* 75: 489).

1981 Shetland Weisdale, immature, 4th October; presumed same, dead, Kergord, 17th November (I. & Mrs I. Sandison *et al.*).

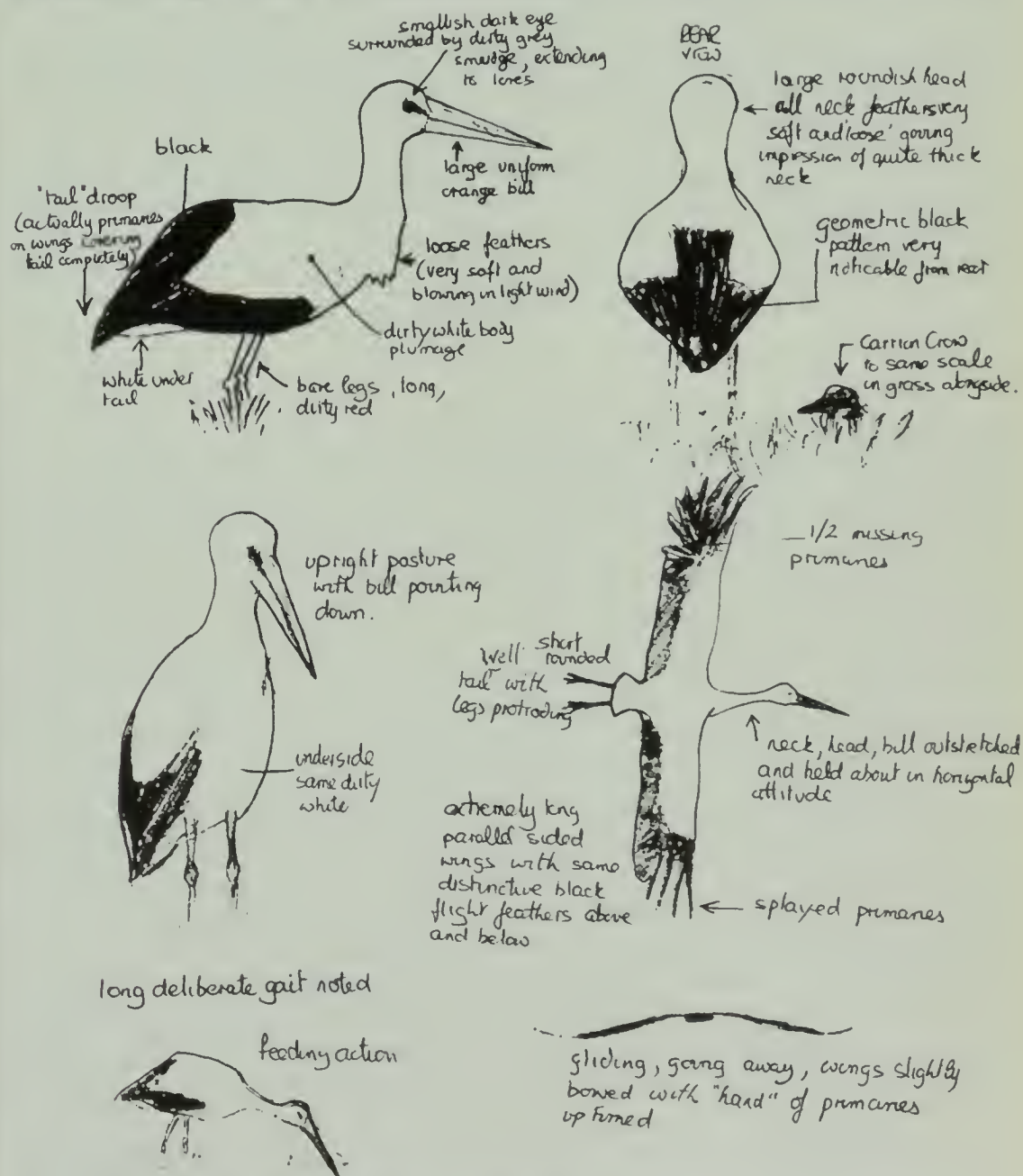
1981 Suffolk Minsmere and Walberswick area, various dates April (*Brit. Birds* 75: 489), also Minsmere, 16th and 27th to 31st May and 20th June, and Walberswick, 18th May (per D. R. Moore).

1981 Sussex, West Pagham Harbour, adult, 11th April (R. S. Kelly), presumed additional to that of 4th (*Brit. Birds* 75: 489).

(South-central Eurasia, north to the Netherlands, and Africa) A fairly typical showing. Although generally associated with the English east coast, the Oxwich bird was the ninth to be seen there since 1975.

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* (26, 20, 0)

(Iberia, and Eurasia from France to China, also southern Africa) Enquiries have confirmed that a Black Stork escaped from Port Lympne Zoo Park, Hythe, Kent, during the late summer of 1981, and it is considered that this was almost certainly the much-watched and rather tame individual which frequented the Reculver/Whitstable area of Kent from at least 5th October to at least 17th December 1981. We have been unable to confirm rumours that it was subsequently shot.

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* (70, 215, 11)**Clwyd** Sandycroft, 6th to 7th April (B. K. Hassall, G. Neal *et al.*).**Durham** Great Stainton, 6th May (D. Raw) (fig. 3).**Dyfed** St David's, Pembrokeshire, 27th to 30th April (J. W. Donovan *et al.*).**Glamorgan, West** Mynydd y Gwair area, 2nd August (C. F. Street).**Grampian** Rora, 16th April (Mrs J. D. Breward).**Gwynedd** Dwyran, Anglesey, 6th April (L. T. Colley *et al.* per N. E. Gammon).**Kent** Hildenborough, 1st May (R. J. Cruise); presumed same, Dartford, 2nd (A. J. & R. Morris). Sandwich Bay, 24th May and 12th June (D. M. Batchelor, P. W. J. Findley, I. Hunter *et al.*).**Norfolk** Great Cressingham, near Swaffham, 8th May (L. R. Chapman *et al.*). Suffield/Gimton Park area, 9th July to 2nd August (M. Fiszler *et al.*), probably present since May. Broads, 3rd September to 7th October (P. R. Allard *et al.*). All likely to relate to same individual and to that in Suffolk.**Suffolk** Walberswick, 9th May (W. E. Norvell); presumed same, Blythe Estuary, 11th; Minsmere, 12th August; Benacre, 27th to 28th August; Benacre, 17th October to at least 6th November; Wangford, 14th; and Minsmere, 18th and 29th December (per D. R. Moore *et al.*).Fig. 3. Sketches of White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*, Durham, May 1982 (D. Raw)

Presumed same, near Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, 10th February 1983.

Sussex, East Pevensey Levels, 23rd April (R. K. Haggard).

Sussex, West Shoreham-by-Sea, 24th April (S. R. Allen, J. Dixon, Dr J. A. Newnham *et al.*).
Near Arundel, 9th June (A. C. M. Haes per R. D. M. Edgar).

1977 Essex Rowhedge/Great Bromley individual, 26th June (*Brit. Birds* 73: 496), also seen Clacton-on-Sea, 20th (per Dr S. Cox), therefore additional to Ramsden Heath individual, 9th to 22nd June (*Brit. Birds* 73: 496).

1979 Cumbria Sebergham and Brocklebank, 3rd to 6th June (R. K. Jones).

1981 Kent Strood, 8th April (J. Beynon). Pegwell Bay, 17th August (F. Solly). Sandwich Bay, two, 21st September (N. Woods).

(Central and south Europe, southwest Asia and northwest Africa)
J. Ruinaard (*in litt.*) has provided some interesting information from the Netherlands. As an attempt to halt the decline in their population of White Storks, the Dutch have instigated a reintroduction programme, augmenting wild birds from three captive-breeding stations. In 1982, there were only two wild pairs left in the Netherlands, but two mixed pairs of wild and feral storks. There is now a small, but increasing population of introduced birds and, as these are resident, winter records in Britain (such as the Suffolk one above) must be regarded as suspect. (There were, incidentally, few winter stork records in the Netherlands before reintroduction began.) The record of a White Stork regrettably shot in Lancashire on 31st October 1981 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 489-490) and ringed at Liesveld, Netherlands, did in fact originate from one of these breeding stations. It has, however, been retained in the totals as it will obviously prove impossible to adopt clear-cut criteria for separating wild and feral birds in this country.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* (many, 24, 1)

Kent Stodmarsh, two, since 1975 and 1979 respectively (not 1980 as stated *Brit. Birds* 75: 490) to early April, 8th September and from early October to end of year, summering as usual on Sheppey (per D. W. Taylor). See also Suffolk.

Norfolk Burnham Overy, 24th October (B. L. Sage); also same day at Titchwell (Miss M. D. Butler, E. T. Myers) and Holme (A. Banwell, P. R. Clarke, V. Eve *et al.*).

Suffolk Minsmere, 12th August (S. Abbott, J. M. W. Murphy), possibly a repeat visit by one of Kent individuals (*Brit. Birds* 75: 490).

1981 Norfolk Broads, two, 10th May (J. J. Buxton, H. Scott), presumed same as Suffolk individuals—see below.

1981 Suffolk Minsmere, two, 8th to 9th May (*Brit. Birds* 75: 490). One, presumed of same, 18th (M. Heffern per D. R. Moore) and 29th (Z. Bhatia *et al.*).

(Cosmopolitan, nearest breeding colonies in Balkans) In Ireland, the bird first seen at Lough Beg, Co. Cork, on 7th March 1981 and subsequently at Ballycotton, Co. Cork, from 3rd April 1981 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 490), remained at the latter locality throughout 1982. It seems as though this Irish bird is set to emulate its long-staying Kentish cousins. Observers fortunate enough to discover a Glossy Ibis should always bear in mind the possibility of escaped White-faced Ibis *P. chihi* and, perhaps more likely, Puna Ibis *P. ridgwayi*, both of which are superficially similar to Glossy Ibis. The essential reference for sorting out Glossy and the very similar White-faced was published in 1976 by H. Douglas Pratt (*Birding* 8: 1-3). Observers are advised to pay particular attention to the colours of the facial skin, bill and iris.

Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus* (47, 63, 0)

Gloucestershire Slimbridge, pair, 18th December 1981 to 7th March (*Brit. Birds* 75: 490); immature, 31st December 1981 to 5th March (*Brit. Birds* 75: 490).

(Northeast Europe and Siberia) These three, plus a first-winter Snow Goose *A. caerulescens*, provided some excellent goose-watching at Slimbridge early in the year (but still no Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis*, the last recorded there being as long ago as 1969).

Brent Goose *Branta bernicla* (1, 4, 2)

Individuals showing characters of the North American and east Siberian race *B. b. nigricans*, colloquially known as 'Black Brant', were recorded as follows:

Essex North Fambridge area, 20th to 28th January (J. Dobson, D. Wood).

Lincolnshire Donna Nook and Saltfleet area, 21st to 23rd January (H. Bunn, G. P. Catley, M. Mellor).

(Arctic North America and east Siberia) Following one in Essex in 1957 and 1958, this race has been annual since 1974. No doubt time will show it to be of fairly regular occurrence here.

American Wigeon *Anas americana* (22, 90, 4)

Gloucestershire Ashleworth Ham, ♂, 18th to at least 30th April (D. V. Mardle, J. D. Sanders *et al.*).

Northamptonshire Ditchford Gravel-pits, ♂, 24th November to 7th December (S. G. Page, A. S. Vials *et al.*).

Orkney Birsay Bay, ♂, 3rd May (D. Lea *et al.*).

Yorkshire, South Broomhill Flash, first-winter ♂, 5th March to 7th April (N. W. Addey, J. Hewitt *et al.*).

1981 Highland Near Inverness, ♂, 9th to 10th May (C. J. McCarty *et al.*).

(North America) Also a late Irish record: a male at Shane's Castle, Co. Antrim, from 5th to 12th December 1979. Several 1981/82 records (including at least five on the Hayle Estuary, Cornwall) remain under consideration.

Teal *Anas crecca* (13, 163, 11)

Drakes showing characters of the North American race *A. c. carolinensis*, colloquially known as 'Green-winged Teal', were recorded as follows:

Cambridgeshire Ouse Washes, at least 7th March (R. G. Newell *et al.*).

Cornwall Hayle, individual first seen 5th October 1981 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 491) to 27th February; presumed same, 16th October to 1983 (per S. M. Christophers).

Gloucestershire Slimbridge, 7th to 12th March (R. Goater, A. & M. Lord).

Hampshire Dibden Bay, 6th February and 13th March (K. M. Godfrey, S. W. Smith). Stratfield Saye Park, 11th to 17th March (J. M. Clark).

Highland Inverness, first seen 29th December 1981 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 491) to at least 10th January (per R. H. Dennis). Alness Bay, 12th February (F. L. Symonds), same, Dalmore, 12th February (C. J. McCarty, D. M. Pullan), same as Dalmore individual 1981—see below.

Merseyside Marshside, 6th January (A. H. J. Harrop).

Norfolk Welney, 28th November (R. G. Newell *et al.*).

Suffolk Minsmere, 13th to at least 17th November (K. Fairclough *et al.*).

1979 Highland St John's Loch, Caithness, 16th December to 20th January 1980 (Dr D. M. & Mrs J. Edge).

1980 Highland See above.

1981 Cornwall Hayle, at least 5th to 31st October (*Brit. Birds* 75: 491), 3rd November (S. M. Christophers) and until 27th February 1982 (per S. M. Christophers).

1981 Highland The Mound, Sutherland, 28th January (Dr D. M. & Mrs J. Edge). Dálmore, Ross & Cromarty, 17th December (C. J. McCarty), also in 1982: see above.

(North America) Five in Ireland: Knockderry Reservoir, Co. Waterford, from 23rd January to 20th March; Ballymacoda, Co. Cork, from 5th February to 3rd March; Brittas Ponds, Co. Dublin, from 7th to 14th February; Kilrush, Co. Clare, on 18th February and Tacumshin Lake, Co. Wexford, on 12th April. A bird of this race has now spent seven consecutive winters on the Hayle Estuary.

Black Duck *Anas rubripes* (1, 11, 0)

Gwynedd Aber, ♂, first seen 1979 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 491) to at least 6th February (L. G. R. Evans *et al.*).

Highland North Kessock, Inverness, ♂, first seen 11th October 1981 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 491) to at least March (R. H. Dennis).

Scilly Tresco, ♀, first seen 1976 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 491) present throughout year; again mated with Mallard; four young, July. At least three hybrid offspring from earlier years also present (D. B. Hunt *et al.*).

1981 Gwynedd Aber, ♂, first seen 1979 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 491) present throughout year; up to three hybrids, presumed those reared in 1980 (*Brit. Birds* 74: 461), during autumn (per I. Wynmclean).

(North America) Long-stayers and continued hybridisation.

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors* (19, 78, 7)

Cornwall Marazion, immature ♂, 18th September (K. Pellow).

Gloucestershire Ashleworth Ham, ♂, 27th to 28th December (R. W. Grove, P. Zaltowski *et al.*).

Humberside Blacktoft Sands, ♂, 23rd September to 19th October (A. Grieve, C. Jarvis *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Huttoft, probably immature ♂, 26th September to 1st October (R. Bennett, G. P. Catley *et al.*).

Scilly St. Mary's, ♀, 9th to 20th September (M. Goodey *et al.*).

Shetland Out Skerries, probably immature ♂, 12th to 20th September (D. M. Pullan, E. Tait *et al.*).

Somerset Sutton Bingham Reservoir, ♀, 13th January (P. Akers, D. J. Chown).

1979 Dorset Abbotsbury, immature ♀, trapped, 25th October (*Brit. Birds* 73: 499), shot, Hautebut, France (Somme), 22nd February 1981 and identified as adult ♂ Cinnamon Teal *A. cyanoptera* (per BTO).

1980 Hereford & Worcester Upton Warren, ♂ and immature, at least 4th to 9th November (*Brit. Birds* 74: 461), both, 11th (I. K. Dawson).

(North America) The 1979 record from Abbotsbury, Dorset, clearly illustrates the caution required when identifying this species when not in full adult male plumage. On re-reading the description, it was clear to the Committee that it should originally have been published with the standard Cinnamon Teal caveat. In their book *Rare Birds in Britain and Ireland*, an analysis by Dr J. T. R. and E. M. Sharrock of the records during 1958-72 revealed small spring and autumn peaks. Since 1972, however, a better understanding of the female, immature and eclipse male plumages has led to a more realistic scatter of records: it remains extremely rare in winter (only five November to March records), more frequent in spring (12 in April to June), but easily most numerous in autumn (33 in August to October), with a peak of 17 in September. This pattern is hardly surprising in view of the fact that this is very much the Nearctic equivalent of the Garganey *A. querquedula* and, like that species, would no doubt find winter survival here problematical.

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* (1, 141, 12)

Cumbria Sunbiggin Tarn, ♂, 4th to 5th April (R. Bottomly, R. I. Kinley, S. J. Robinson *et al.*); presumed same, Esthwaite Water, 2nd to 5th May (G. Agar, Dr W. Davison, M. Hutcheson *et al.*).

Dumfries & Galloway Black Water of Dee, ♂, 15th January; presumed same, Loch Ken, 29th January to 25th March (Sir N. & Lady Henderson, L. A. Urquhart *et al.*).

Highland Insh Marshes, ♂, 16th March (Dr C. Bradshaw).

Humberside Tophill Low Reservoir, ♂, 1st January to 3rd April (B. Fendley *et al.*); presumed same, 7th November to at least 31st December (A. Lowe *et al.*), presumed returning individual of 1981 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 493). See also 1981 Humberside below.

Lothian Duddingston Loch, Edinburgh, ♂, 24th March (J. Chester).

Oxfordshire Astall and Swinbrook Ponds and Stanton Harcourt, ♂, 31st January to 28th March (R. Burgess, J. Clarke, S. G. Perry *et al.*).

Scilly St Mary's, ♂ and two immature ♀♀, 27th September (R. Allison, M. A. Hollingworth, S. Rivers *et al.*).

Shetland Loch of Brow, ♀, 21st to 24th October (J. N. Dymond *et al.*).

Strathclyde Loch Leathan, Argyll, ♂, 6th to 7th March (D. Thorogood). Loch Ba, Mull, ♂, 15th to 17th May (R. F. Coomber, the late P. J. Tullett, S. J. Woolfall).

Sussex, West Chichester Gravel-pits, ♂, 4th to 31st December (R. S. Kelly, A. R. Kitson, M. P. Sutherland *et al.*).

Western Isles Loch Grinavat, Lewis, ♂, 9th May (W. A. J. Cunningham, Dr I. H. Leach).

1978 Cheshire Rode Pool, ♂, 1st to 7th May (D. Allen, M. Arrowsmith).

1980 Devon Slapton Ley, two ♀♀, 9th March (*Brit. Birds* 74: 462), also 29th to 30th (D. J. Fisher).

1981 Cornwall Crowdy Reservoir, two ♀♀ or immatures, 4th January to 5th April (F. H. C. & I. Kendall *et al.*), possibly same as Siblyback Reservoir individuals, 2nd January (*Brit. Birds* 75: 492).

1981 Cornwall/Devon Tamar Estuary, two ♂♂ and ♀, 1st January (*Brit. Birds* 75: 492), also 2nd (per S. M. Christophers).

1981 Devon See 1981 Cornwall/Devon.

1981 Dumfries & Galloway Souleseat Loch, ♂, 6th December (I. J. Andrews, J. L. & Mrs M. Swallow), possibly returning individual of winter 1980/81 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 492).

1981 Dyfed Bosherton Pools, ♂, 1st November (*Brit. Birds* 75: 492), was immature and present 9th October to at least 15th November and, presumed same, 18th December (per J. W. Donovan).

1981 Humberside Tophill Low Reservoir (*Brit. Birds* 75: 493), full details should read: ♂♂, 2nd January to 4th May, two, 6th to 11th January; presumed returning individual, 8th November to 3rd April 1982 (per I. Forsyth). Messingham, ♂, 25th May to 6th June (J. T. Harriman *et al.* per G. P. Catley), presumed returning individual of 1980 (*Brit. Birds* 74: 462).

1981 Shetland Snarravoe Loch, Unst, ♂, 12th February (I. Sandison) and 2nd March (M. Heubeck); presumed same Cullivoe, Yell, 13th March (J. N. Dymond) and presumed same as that at other localities in May/June (*Brit. Birds* 75: 493). Loch of Brow, ♂, 1st November to 6th December (D. P. P. Eva, C. R. Kightley, J. D. Okill *et al.*).

1981 Yorkshire, North Wheldrake Ings, ♂, 14th to 20th and 25th April (T. Barker, B. G. Pepper, D. R. Waudby *et al.*), possibly one of Humberside individuals.

(North America) In Ireland, single males at Loch Gur, Co. Limerick, on 1st January and at Gougane Barra, Co. Cork, from November 1981 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 494) until 21st February. There was also a late record of a male at Knock Lake, Co. Dublin, from 2nd January to 22nd March 1981 and again from 17th October to 13th March 1982. After a blank year in 1975, the totals of apparent new arrivals read: 6, 25, 13, 29, 35, 12 and 12. No doubt many of this year's records relate to wandering individuals from the big influx years of 1977, 1979 and 1980, but some new ones almost certainly did cross the Atlantic, as indicated by the three in Scilly.

King Eider *Somateria spectabilis* (62, 100, 4)

Grampian Ythan Estuary and Murcar, ♂, 23rd April to 11th July (H. Olsthoorn *et al.*);

presumed same, Blackdog, 4th July (J. P. Martin).

Highland Loch Fleet, ♂♂, 20th to 21st and 27th March and 13th April, two, 21st and 27th March; one, 23rd October; 29th November. Embo, ♂, 10th and 24th February, possibly one of Loch Fleet individuals; ♂, 23rd October and 29th November probably additional (A. R. Mainwood *et al.*). Presumably returning individuals of 1981 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 494).

Orkney Kirkwall Harbour, ♀, 10th December to at least January 1983 (E. R. Meek *et al.*).

Shetland Lerwick Harbour, ♀, 31st January to 8th April (D. Coutts). Voc, immature ♂, 17th to 18th April (D. Coutts, M. Heubeck). Holm of Heogland, Unst, ♂, 24th November (M. Heubeck, J. S. Morton, R. J. Tulloch).

Strathclyde Port Glasgow, ♂, at least 22nd November (S. Benn, B. Brodie, B. C. Forrester *et al.*), presumed returning individual of 1981 and earlier years (*Brit. Birds* 75: 494).

1974 Highland Loch Fleet, immature ♂, 20th to 28th April (*Brit. Birds* 68: 314), again, 2nd May (R. B. Hastings).

1976 Fife Crombie Point, ♂, at least 3rd to 24th January (*Brit. Birds* 72: 516), again 15th February (I. K. Dawson); presumed same returned November to December (*Scottish Birds* 10: 86).

1980 Highland Golspie and Loch Fleet area, ♂, again 13th November (*Brit. Birds* 75: 495), should read, again 13th December.

1981 Highland Golspie/Embo area, at least one ♂, throughout year (*Brit. Birds* 75: 494), ♂, Embo, 18th March; two possibly including same, off Loch Fleet, 19th, one 20th (J. McLoughlin *et al.*).

(Circumpolar Arctic) Also, the male first seen at Rosbeg, Co. Donegal, on 21st April 1974 (*Brit. Birds* 68: 314), was seen again in April and May. The females are the first since 1975.

Steller's Eider *Polysticta stelleri* (5, 8, 0)

Orkney Papa Westray, ♂, 30th April to 1st July (J. Rendall, J. B. Ribbands), presumed same as 1981 individual first seen 1974 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 495).

Western Isles Vorrán Island, North Uist, ♂, first seen 1972 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 495), present throughout year (per W. A. J. Cunningham *et al.*).

(Arctic Russia to extreme northwest Canada)

Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata* (75, 100, 6)

Cleveland Marske, ♀ or immature, 10th to 30th November (D. J. Britton *et al.*).

Grampian Spey Bay, two ♂♂, at least 26th December (R. H. Dennis, P. M. Ellis, P. R. Gordon).

Highland Dornoch, Sutherland, ♂, at least 15th January and 21st February (C. J. McCarty); presumed same, Embo, 13th April (J. Barrett per A. R. Mainwood).

Lothian Aberlady Bay, ♂ and ♀, 13th to 14th April (G. Anderson, P. R. Gordon, K. A. & Mrs D. M. Hudson).

Strathclyde Loch Indaal, Islay, ♂, 4th October (P. M. Ellis).

1974 Highland Loch Fleet, ♂, 21st March to 14th April (*Brit. Birds* 68: 313), again 18th (R. B. Hastings).

1975 Highland Loch Fleet, two ♂♂, 1st January to 16th March (*Brit. Birds* 69: 331), one 26th April (R. B. Hastings).

1979 Grampian Spey Bay, ♂♂, one to 25th February (*Brit. Birds* 74: 464), one, Boar's Head Rocks, same area, 4th March (G. P. Catley, M. Mellor).

1981 Glamorgan, West Eglwys Nunydd Reservoir, immature ♂, 10th to 12th October (*Brit. Birds* 75: 495), last seen 12th November (per R. G. Smith).

1981 Grampian Spey Bay, ♂, 23rd to 24th April (*Brit. Birds* 75: 495), first observers were Mr & Mrs R. Todd.

1981 Tyne & Wear Whitburn, ♂, 12th November (B. Stewart).

(North America) In Ireland, two males and a female in Ballinesker/Rosslare Bay area, Co. Wexford, from 1st January to 25th April and a male on 23rd October. Also, a female at Ballycotton, Co. Cork, from 3rd to 17th

October. The Grampian, Highland and two of the Wexford individuals are treated in the totals as veterans of previous years.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* (5, 49, 4)

Kent Dungeness, 8th May (J. R. H. Clements). Sandwich Bay, adult, 16th May (M. Allen, T. Duncan, R. Hollingworth *et al.*).

Man Call of Man, 3rd June (D. Leese, N. J. Thomas).

1980 Essex Near Ongar, adult, dead, about 1st October, now at Colchester Museum (J. Swann per J. Miller).

1981 Kent Hatch Park, 27th to 28th May (*Brit. Birds* 75: 496), also 29th (J. McLoughlin).

(Most of Eurasia, Africa and Australia) Close on the heels of Ireland's first record in 1981 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 496) came its second, at Greystones/Kilcoole, Co. Wicklow, from 12th to 20th September. There was also one in the Channel Islands, at St Ouen, Jersey, from 18th July to 18th September. Although occurrences of this species have steadily increased since 1966, it still remains rather a difficult bird to catch up with in Britain.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* (many, 7, 2)

Humberside Thorne Moors, immature, 28th February to 1st March (W. H. Priestley, G. Sellors, A. D. Warren); presumed same, Spurn, 1st March (A. G. & M. E. Blunt *et al.*).

Suffolk Minsmere and Sizewell area, second-year, 21st to 30th January (J. Sorensen, M. Trubridge *et al.*).

(Southwest Greenland, Iceland and northern Eurasia) A late record from Ireland involved an adult in west Kerry from 27th December 1978 to 27th April 1980. Although four White-tailed Eagles were released on Fair Isle in 1968, the Rhum introductions did not begin until 1975 (*Brit. Birds* 71: 475-481), so the Irish bird, being an adult, was obviously not from that stock. Records of individuals wandering from Rhum are being collated by R. H. Dennis and are not published here. Although there is a possibility that the two 1982 English records originated from these introductions, it is generally accepted that they were genuine European vagrants. There were four British records during 1958-62 (three of which were also in East Anglia), but since then the only accepted occurrences have been in Cornwall in 1973 (*Brit. Birds* 67: 318) and the Irish individual mentioned above. Needless to say, the Suffolk bird generated a great deal of excitement and the scene at Sizewell resembled an anti-nuclear demonstration rather than the scene of a rarity, no doubt much to the consternation of the workers at the nearby power station. The bird itself proved rather elusive, but the exciting—if rather incongruous—sight of a barn door flying through the Suffolk countryside will no doubt be forever etched on the minds of the assembled masses. Enquiries still continue in order to determine whether the same individual was involved in the two records.

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* (100, 244, 7)

Dorset Portland, juvenile, 21st to 23rd October (M. Rogers, G. Walbridge, D. Walker *et al.*).

Hampshire New Forest, ♂, at least 28th April (E. Baker, C. Brandeys *et al.*); first-summer ♂, at least 30th to 31st May (P. G. Akers, D. J. Chown, M. A. Hallett *et al.*).

Kent Sandwich Bay, ♀, 19th to 29th May (P. W. J. Findley, I. Hunter, R. H. Lawrence *et al.*). Near Faversham, first-summer ♂, 29th May (J. E. C. Viner).

Lincolnshire North Killingholme, ♀, 16th May (G. P. Catley).

Shropshire Near Shrewsbury, ♀, 13th to 26th June (D. K. Chesterman, C. Johnson, C. E. Wright *et al.*).

1973 Orkney South Ronaldsay, ♂, dead, 25th May (W. Groundwater); now at Royal Scottish Museum.

1981 Norfolk Bacton, ♀, 24th to 25th May (*Brit. Birds* 75: 496), remained to 3rd June (per P. R. Allard).

(East Europe and south from Siberia) The belated 1973 record brings that year's total to an amazing 43. This year's total is below average by recent standards, but two records from Yorkshire, including the much-watched Potteric Carr individual, are still in circulation.

Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus* (many, 65, 1)

Shetland Fair Isle, 9th December (J. F. & Mrs S. Holloway, N. J. Riddiford, Mrs A. Sinclair).

1981 Shetland Bressay, immature, 22nd September (M. S. Chapman).

(Circumpolar Arctic) Also a late record of one in Ireland, on the North Slob, Co. Wexford, on 21st October 1981. Still very high on most people's 'wanted list', surely it is about time that one wintered in southern Britain?

Sora Rail *Porzana carolina* (5, 2, 1)

Scilly St Mary's, adult, 27th September (Dr R. C. Brace, J. A. Hazell, A. S. Vials *et al.*) (fig. 4).

(North America) This elusive bird showed itself to a handful of fortunate observers at Porthellick Pool, but, unfortunately, it failed to repeat the performance on subsequent days. There were five between 1864 and 1920, but the only recent records were in 1973 and 1981 (*Brit. Birds* 69: 443-444; 75: 497). A record on Foula, Shetland, in late October 1982, remains under consideration.

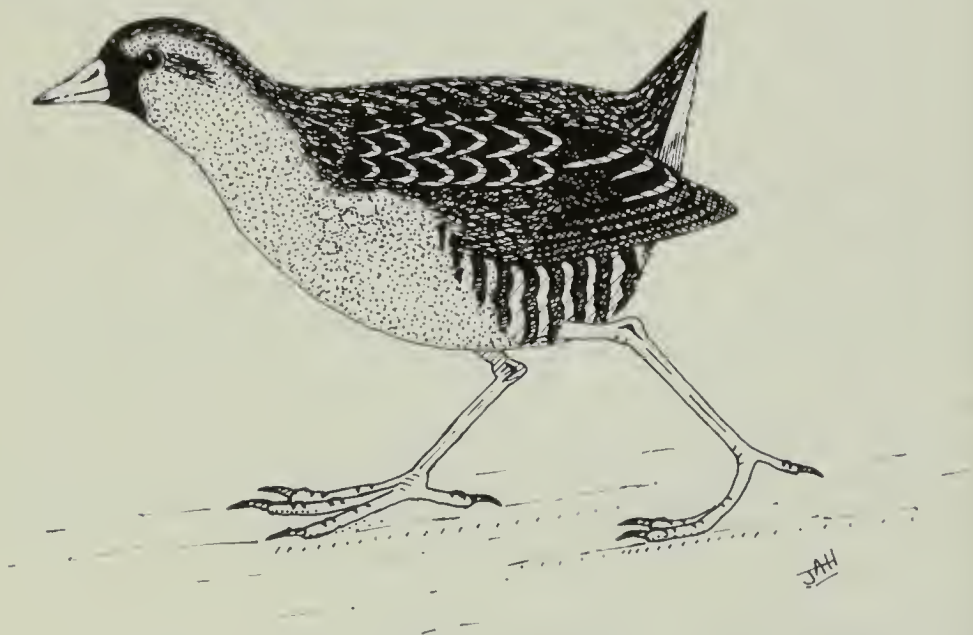


Fig. 4. Adult Sora Rail *Porzana carolina*, Scilly, September 1982 (J. A. Hazell)

Crane *Grus grus* (many, 798, 141)

Devon Prawle Point, three, 7th November (R. Andrew, P. Harrison, P. F. & Mrs B. P. Williams); presumed same three, Exeter, 8th (A. Hawkins).

Essex Rainham, 15th May (M. K. Dennis, N. Iungius, S. Young); presumed same, Leigh-on-Sea, same day (B. R. Baldock, D. M. Shayler).

Gloucestershire Twixt Winston and Sapperton, 7th December (Miss B. M. Powell).

Highland Laide, Wester Ross, 25th to 26th March (S. Horton Ormerod *et al.*).

Humberside Kilnsea, two adults and one juvenile, 10th November (A. J. Last); same three. Spurn, later (J. Cudworth).

Kent Walland Marsh, two, 27th October (N. R. Davies). Dungeness, 17 and 33. 30th; nine and one, 31st (J. H., M. M. & S. J. Cox); 17, 13th November (K. Wheatley). Ham Street, ten, 31st October (M. J. Sinden), seen later at Dungeness as above. Folkestone, 18, 31st October (S. Boreham). Fairfield, Walland Marsh, 26, 1st November (N. R. Davies). Sheppey, four, 8th November; 17, presumed including same, 10th to 13th, and presumed same party at Dungeness, later, as above (D. Belshaw, J. Harfleet, D. Walker). Chislet, adult, 5th December to 7th March 1983 (R. E. C. Collins, D. C. Gilbert, C. H. Hindle *et al.*).

Norfolk Horsey area, two, January to July, four, August to December (P. R. Allard *et al.*). Cley, adult, 7th February (A. W. & G. J. Stocker).

Orkney Birsay, 20th April (E. R. Meek, Mrs Sinclair). Firth, 4th May (E. J. Williams).

Shetland Haroldswick, Unst, adult, 22nd to 26th April; presumed same, Lund, 2nd May (I. Spence, Mrs J. T. Thomson *et al.*).

Sussex, East Hooe Level, first-winter, 11th January (P. J. Wilson). Lewes Brooks, first-year, 11th to at least 20th April (D. K. Bryson, J. M. Daykin, D. C. Lang *et al.*).

1981 Strathclyde Kilmacolm, Renfrew, two, 31st December (F. Curran).

(North and central Eurasia, locally south to Turkey) Two records from Greater Manchester (one on 31st October and a flock of 18 on 10th December) are still in circulation. Also, further flocks of two, 14, eight and 40 were reported at Dungeness on 30th October, but no details have yet been received by the Committee. This remarkable late-autumn influx of at least 131 (probably 214) represents the largest autumn passage since the classic invasion year of 1963, when at least 500 were recorded (*Brit. Birds* 57: 502-508). The Kent records were noted last month (*Brit. Birds* 76: 451-452). Large numbers were also reported across the Channel, with more than 5,000, perhaps up to 10,000 seen well to the west of their normal migration route in Vendée and Deux-Sèvres, northwest France (*Service Technique de l'O.N.C. Section Oiseaux d'Eau*, 1982), while at least 15,000 also passed through the Netherlands (*Dutch Birding* 4: 144). In both countries, the peak passage was around 7th November; it seems that an abrupt fall in temperature in early November had provoked a large departure from northern Germany and Poland and then the flocks subsequently drifted westwards in strong easterly winds and poor visibility.

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* (31, 31, 1)

Humberside Easington, 30th May (J. Cudworth, S. M. Lister, J. M. Turton *et al.*).

(South Europe, southwest Asia and Africa) See below.

Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni* (5, 13, 1)

Cambridgeshire Mepal, 11th to 12th October (P. Mason, B. Partridge, S. Rooke *et al.*).

(South Russia and west Asia) Whereas the peak month for Collared Pratincole is May (14 out of 31 positively identified), the Black-winged is more of an autumn bird, with the peak month being August (eight of 13 identified since 1958). The above two records, therefore, fit in reasonably well with the established pattern.

Killdeer *Charadrius vociferus* (9, 25, 2)

Gwynedd Bardsey, 17th to 20th March (P. J. Roberts, Mrs E. J. Strick, D. Suddaby).

Scilly St Martin's, probably juvenile, 21st to 22nd and 27th to 30th October (B. C. Forrester *et al.*) (plate 212); same, Tresco, 31st (C. Robson *et al.*).

(North America, West Indies, Peru to Chile) Two fairly typical records of this abundant, noisy, but attractive American wader.

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* (0, 5, 1)

Lothian Aberlady Bay, 24th June (A. Brown, P. R. Gordon *et al.*).

1981 Norfolk Breydon, 17th April (*Brit. Birds* 75: 499), observers did not include T. E. Boulton.

(Southern Russia east to Mongolia) First recorded in 1978, it has become annual since then. The above record recalls the one in Orkney from 9th to at least 14th June 1979 (*Brit. Birds* 74: 467) and it is tempting to suggest that some birds could be reappearing in subsequent years, migrating north and south within western Europe. An article by P. B. Taylor on the separation of Greater and Lesser Sand Plovers *C. mongolus* has recently been published (*Dutch Birding* 4: 113-130).

Lesser Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* (6, 69, 8)

All records apparently related to the North American race *P. d. dominica*.

Cornwall Davidstow Airfield, adult, 22nd September to 5th October (L. C. Cook, L. I. Hamilton, S. C. Madge *et al.*); juvenile, 25th September to at least 3rd October (D. J. Britton, J. R. Hopkins *et al.*). Stithians Reservoir, probably juvenile, 8th October (B. K. Mellow).

Lincolnshire North Killingholme, adult, 24th July (G. P. Catley).

Scilly Gugh, adult, 17th August, same, St Mary's, 18th to 10th September (D. B. Hunt, W. H. Wagstaffe *et al.*). St Mary's, juvenile, 31st October to at least 14th November (W. E. Fletcher, S. M. Whitehouse *et al.*).

1977 Scilly St Mary's, 10th to 12th April (*Brit. Birds* 71: 499), correct dates were 9th to 13th May.

1981 Cornwall Davidstow Airfield, adult, 20th September (J. C. Pett, G. P. Sutton). Stithians Reservoir, juvenile, 12th to 17th October (E. Griffiths *et al.*). Stithians Reservoir, adult, 23rd September to at least 12th October (*Brit. Birds* 75: 500), to 16th (per S. M. Christophers).

1981 Dyfed Skokholm, juvenile, 26th September (G. G. & Mrs E. G. Gynn).

(Arctic North America and northeast Asia) Also, two in Ireland, both at Ballycotton, Co. Cork: a juvenile on 28th August and an adult from 27th September to 5th October. The three late reports for 1981 bring the total to nine, a new record, which was equalled in 1982 (assuming that one in Kent in May will be accepted).

Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla* (2, 27, 4)

Devon Lundy, juvenile, 22nd to 25th August (P. de Groote, S. J. Wing).

Somerset Sutton Bingham Reservoir, juvenile, 2nd to 7th October (D. J. Chown, M. A. Hallett, B. J. Matthews *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 75: plate 234; 76: plate 213).

(North America) Also, two juveniles in Ireland, at Ballycotton, Co. Cork, from 27th to 29th August and at Tucumshin Lake, Co. Wexford, from 18th September to 2nd October. Also, an adult at Ballycotton on 31st July 1981 was considered probably to have been the bird seen earlier on 31st May (*Brit. Birds* 75: 500). This is the third consecutive year that this species has turned up at Tucumshin.

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis* (24, 193, 5)

Cornwall Hayle, adult, 16th September to 3rd October, presumed same Marazion, 6th to

19th October (P. A. Rutter *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 75: plate 235; 76: plates 22 & 214).

Dorset Lodmoor, juvenile, 27th September (M. Cade, Dr G. P. Green).

Hampshire Eling Great Marsh, juvenile, 25th to 27th October (K. D. & R. W. Russell).

Norfolk Titchwell, adult, 31st July (S. C. Joyner, A. Palmer).

1981 Cheshire Frodsham, 16th to at least 19th August (*Brit. Birds* 75: 500), probably same, 8th September (B. Henshaw).

1981 Kent Elmley, 15th September (P. N. Collin, D. Perrin).

(North America) Also one in Ireland, at Rosslare Back Strand, Co. Wexford, on 14th August. By recent standards, a below-average year.

Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii* (5, 87, 6)

Cheshire Frodsham, 30th September to 3rd October (Dr R. J. Raines *et al.*).

Grampian Findhorn Bay, juvenile, 5th to 6th October (N. Elkins, B. Etheridge, W. Taylor).

Merseyside Marshside, juvenile, 19th to 25th September (Dr P. H. Smith *et al.*) (plates 201 & 202).



201 & 202. Juvenile Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii*, Merseyside, September 1982 (R. Travis)

Norfolk Cley and Salhouse, adult, 22nd August to 13th September (J. R. Appleton, G. E. Dunmore, J. Miller *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, juvenile, 17th to 21st September (A. V. Moon, N. J. Riddiford, J. J. Sweeney *et al.*) (plate 203).

Surrey Staines Reservoirs, first-year, 14th October to 24th April 1983 (G. M. Haig, J. Herbert, G. A. Richards *et al.*) (fig. 5).

(North America and northeast Siberia) There are two previous



203. Juvenile Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii*, Shetland. September 1982 (John Hewitt)

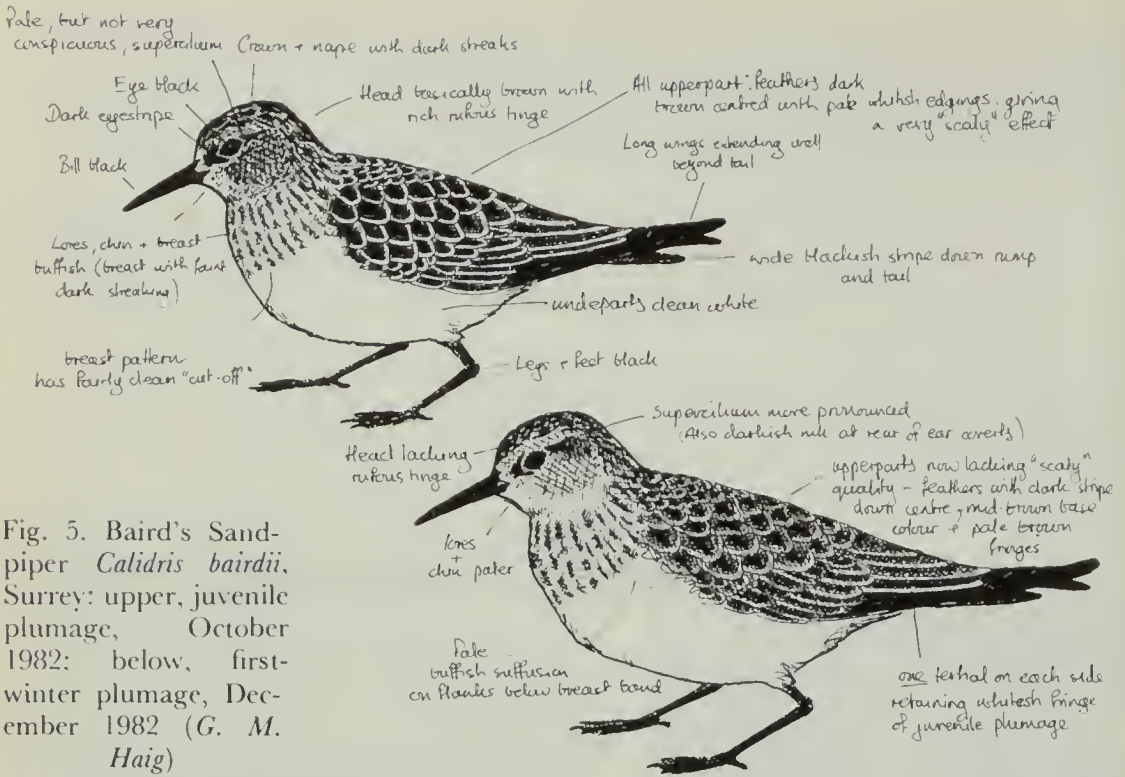


Fig. 5. Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii*, Surrey: upper, juvenile plumage, October 1982; below, first-winter plumage, December 1982 (G. M. Haig)

records for November (*Brit. Birds* 61: 341; 65: 333), but, considering that this species normally winters in South America, south of the equator, it is hardly surprising that the one at Staines was the first wintering record in this country. There are, however, two winter records in West Africa, in Senegal in December 1965 and in The Gambia in November 1976 (*Dutch Birding* 3: 51), perhaps indicating what happens to many transatlantic waders after they leave western Europe.

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata* (5, 10, 1)

Humberside Blacktoft Sands, adult, 17th September (A. Grieve, C. Jarvis, C. Nimick *et al.*); same, North Killingholme, 18th to 20th (G. P. Catley, G. Heyer *et al.*).

(Northeast Siberia) Although annual during 1973-78, this is the first since then. A large number of observers queued for the hides at Blacktoft at dawn on 18th, but, as the thick fog which shrouded the area gradually began to lift, they found themselves staring at some depressingly empty pools. Unfortunately, most had set off for home before the news came through that it had been relocated farther down the Humber, at North Killingholme. Those who had not left spent the night in a pub car park, while the remainder turned around and headed back again! Fortunately, this decidedly crane-like wader hung around long enough to be widely appreciated over the following couple of days.

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* (23, 43, 7)

Hampshire Horsea Island, 22nd to 25th May (R. A. Barrett, D. Unsworth *et al.*).

Kent Cliffe, 13th to 16th May (D. Leach, A. T. M. Ruck, L. F. Woollard *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Saltfleetby, 26th May (B. M. Clarkson, M. J. Tarrant *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 75: plate 148).

Norfolk Hickling, 25th May (D. J. Holman *et al.*). Cley, 26th to 27th May (J. B. Kemp *et al.*); adult, 23rd to at least 26th July (P. Bawden, J. Frank, P. K. Jackson *et al.*) (fig. 6).

Suffolk Minsmere, 3rd to 6th July (J. H. Grant, R. Hoccam *et al.*).

1981 Cleveland Long Drag Pool, 31st May (C. Bielby, R. E. Innes, W. Irving).

(North Eurasia) Seven is a new peak for this species, although it is very tempting to link some of the above occurrences.

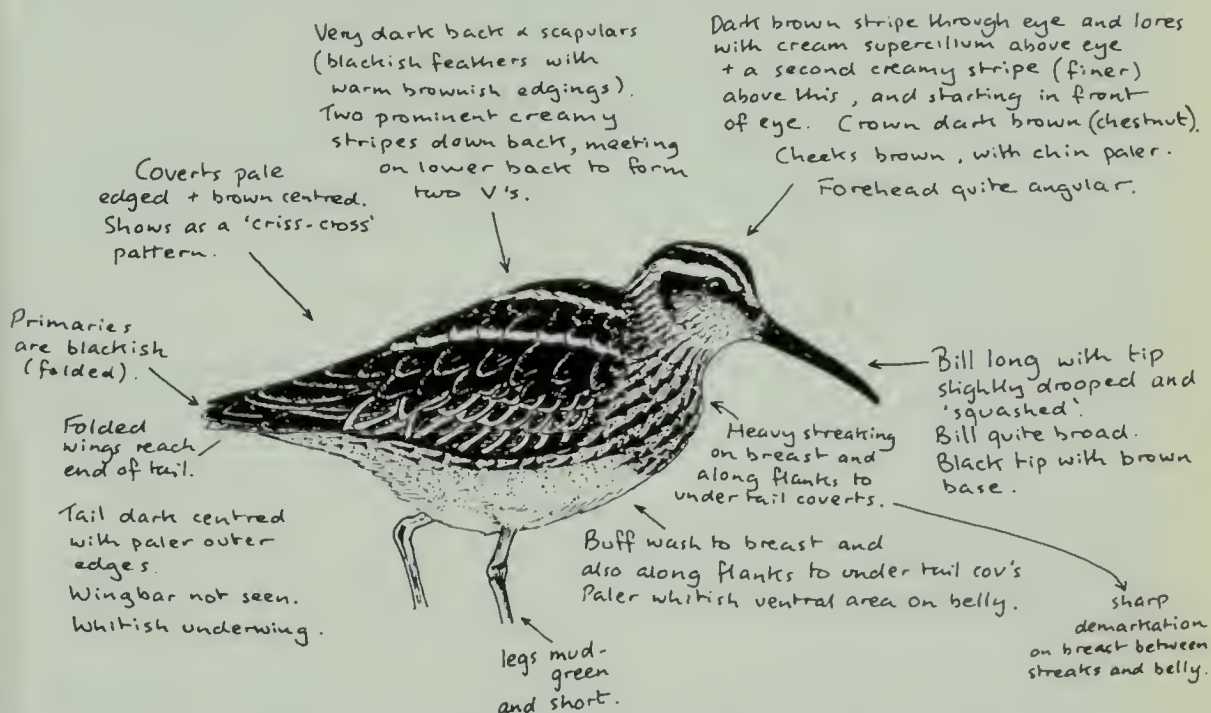


Fig. 6. Adult Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus*, Norfolk, July 1982 (Philip Bawden)

Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis* (33, 385, 23)

Cambridgeshire Peterborough, 1st to 6th October (R. L. K. Joliffe *et al.*).

Cornwall Stithians Reservoir, two, 2nd to 4th September (R. J. & Mrs E. Chandler *et al.*). Upper Tamar Reservoir, juveniles, 12th to 14th September, two, 19th (F. H. C. & I. Kendall, G. P. Sutton). Davidstow Airfield, 16th September (I. Prophet); adult, 24th September to 8th October (F. H. C. & I. Kendall, G. P. Sutton *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 76: plate 17); two juveniles, 30th September to 8th October (D. J. Britton, J. C. Pett *et al.*). Predannack Airfield, at least one juvenile, at least 25th September (E. Griffiths, J. M. Randall, R. Smaldon). St Just Airfield, 29th September (S. C. Hutchings, L. P. Williams).

Essex Abberton Reservoir, 22nd August (S. Shippey).

Lincolnshire Saltfleetby, adult, 11th to 15th August (B. M. Clarkson *et al.*).

Norfolk Cley, 15th to 18th May (B. Reed *et al.*).

Northumberland Hauxley, juvenile ♀, 17th September to 4th October, trapped 19th September (M. Davison, M. Nattrass, J. Richardson).

Scilly St Mary's, juvenile, 14th to 21st September (W. H. Wagstaffe *et al.*); adult, 22nd September to 4th October (J. W. Houghton, M. J. Scott-Ham *et al.*); juvenile, 23rd September to 4th October (D. N. Bakewell *et al.*). St Agnes, 7th October (C. I. Bushell *et al.*).

Shetland Out Skerries, 17th September (D. M. Pullan *et al.*).

1980 Cleveland Saltholme Pools, 18th to at least 20th September (*Brit. Birds* 75: 502), also 21st (P. J. Dunn *et al.*).

1980 Staffordshire Blithfield Reservoir (*Brit. Birds* 75: 502), full dates were 7th to 22nd September and first observers were P. G. Barratt, E. S. Clare, B. Hill.

1981 Cheshire Frodsham, 6th to 7th September (*Brit. Birds* 75: 501), two, 7th to 8th (B. Henshaw), one to 9th (per S. W. Holmes).

1981 Greater London Barn Elms Reservoirs, 12th October (P. E. Brown).

(North America) Also two in Ireland, at Tacumshin Lake, Co. Wexford, on 21st August and at Lissagriffin, Co. Cork, from 25th to 27th September. In addition, there was a late record for 1981 of one at Ballycotton, Co. Cork, on the early date of 12th July. A reasonably good year, though it seems that several Cornish records remain unreported.

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* (9, 69, 2)

Cornwall Stithians Reservoir, juvenile/first-winter, first seen 8th October 1981 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 503), to 23rd March (not 25th as previously stated) (per S. M. Christophers). Stithians Reservoir, 8th November to 1983 (B. K. Mellow *et al.*).

Hampshire Pennington Marshes, first seen 3rd October 1981 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 503), to at least 13th May. Titchfield Haven, 4th November (B. S. Duffin, R. K. Levett).

1978 Scilly St Mary's, juvenile, 3rd to 18th October (*Brit. Birds* 72: 523), was on Tresco, 19th to at least 29th, not St Agnes as stated.

1980 Dumfries & Galloway Caerlaverock, 3rd November to 26th April 1981 (B. Sears, M. Wright *et al.*).

1981 Cornwall See Cornwall above.

1981 Dumfries & Galloway See 1980 Dumfries & Galloway above.

1981 Kent Elmley, 7th to 19th July (P. Aley, S. Cox, P. D. Kemp *et al.*).

(North America and northeast Siberia) Also, a first-winter at St Ouen, Jersey, from 28th March to 1st April (see below for an Irish record). The worst showing since 1974.

Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* or *L. griseus* (31, 161, 3)

1981 Cornwall Stithians Reservoir, 27th September (R. Claxton, M. S. Smith), probably same as Long-billed, 8th October (*Brit. Birds* 75: 503).

1981 Merseyside Banks Marsh, 6th March to 12th April (W. D. Forshaw, Dr P. H. Smith *et al.*).

(North America and northeast Siberia) The above totals include identified Long-billeds. Also, one in Ireland, at the Boyne Estuary, Co. Louth/Meath, from 14th to 28th February. In addition, the two Long-billed Dowitchers which wintered at Ballycotton, Co. Cork, in 1980/81, and again from 16th July 1981, remained into 1982 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 503), but, so far, exact dates have not been forthcoming, although it is known that a 'dowitcher' returned again on 7th August 1982. The Committee was unable to reach a consensus on the identification of the 1981 Merseyside individual, so any additional information, particularly photographs, would be most welcome.

Hudsonian Godwit *Limosa haemastica* (0, 1, 0)

Devon See 1981 Devon.

1981 Devon Countess Wear, adult, 22nd November to at least 14th January 1982 (R. Knightsbridge, G. Peplow, G. Wright *et al.*).

1981 Humberside Blacktoft Sands, adult, 10th September to 3rd October (A. Grieve *et al.*).

(North America) In view of the fact that, in autumn, this species undertakes a long offshore migration from northern Canada to South America, it is perhaps surprising that it has not been recorded here before. The BOU Records Committee was divided as to whether or not these records should be presumed to relate to one individual. The recent report of a Hudsonian Godwit back at Blacktoft in the spring of 1983 (*Brit. Birds* 76: 322) does, however, suggest that perhaps only one bird has been involved. No doubt the careful checking of flocks of Black-tailed Godwits *L. limosa*, particularly in Ireland, would produce further records.

Little Whimbrel *Numenius minutus* (0, 0, 1)

Glamorgan, Mid Sker, adult, 30th (possibly 26th) August to 6th September (S. J. Moon, D. E. J. Ricks *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 75: plate 237; 76: 438-445, plates 183-186).

(Central and northeast Siberia) With impeccable timing, a mouth-

watering paper appeared in July 1982 (*Ibis* 124: 302-319) detailing the breeding behaviour of this little-known wader on its remote Siberian breeding grounds. Although there is a previous European record of an adult in Norway on 14th July 1969 (*BWP* 3: 482) no-one would have dreamt that, only one month after that paper's publication, we would be watching a Little Whimbrel wandering around a field in, of all places, Mid Glamorgan. Although 1982 produced some pretty phenomenal birds, this will remain, for wader buffs particularly, the one that really stood out, if only because it is the nearest we shall ever get to a reappearance by the 'mythical' Eskimo Curlew *N. borealis*.

Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda* (15, 18, 2)

Cornwall Lizard, 26th September to 4th October (Dr K. A. Francis, S. C. Hutchings *et al.*).

Scilly St Agnes, juvenile, 18th to at least 31st October (P. Clement *et al.*) (plate 215), same, St Mary's, 29th (T. H. Smith *et al.*). Differed from Cornwall individual on plumage detail.

(North America) After a singularly unobliging Cornish bird, which was, as one observer put it, 'booted around the Lizard like a football', most observers were well pleased with the confiding St Agnes individual, the first in Scilly for ten years.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* (12, 24, 5)

Avon Chew Valley Lake, probable adult, 3rd to 1th October; same, Blagdon Lake, 5th to 12th (I. R. Machin, D. J. Manns, J. Taylor *et al.*).

Cambridgeshire Peterborough, Huntingdonshire, 28th July (M. R. Coates).

Norfolk Cley, at least 11th to 13th July (J. B. Kemp *et al.*).

Northamptonshire Ditchford Gravel-pits, 1th July (R. W. Bullock, P. Campbell, A. C. Maybury *et al.*).

(Southeast Europe and west and east Asia) This former gross rarity has been annual in Britain since 1976, so it is perhaps not surprising that Ireland should now get its first, a juvenile at Tacumshin Lake, Co. Wexford, from 7th to 13th August.

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* (35, 127, 7)

Cornwall Gannel Estuary, 23rd to 26th October (S. M. Christophers, D. L. Thomas *et al.*).

Devon Aveton Gifford, first seen 28th November 1981 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 504) to at least early April (per P. W. Ellicott). Fremington, 17th October (J. Barber, T. McLellan *et al.*).

Suffolk Minsmere, 8th to 14th October (F. K. Cobb, G. J. Jobson *et al.*).

Yorkshire, South Broomhill Flash, 20th to 21st September (P. Bradley, J. M. Cattle, G. J. Speight *et al.*).

1981 Cornwall Drift Reservoir, first-winter, 13th to 18th October (*Brit. Birds* 75: 504), first seen 12th (C. W. Murphy).

(North America) Also, three in Ireland, at Akeragh Lough, Co. Kerry, from 25th to 31st August, at Tacumshin Lake, Co. Wexford, on 18th and 19th September and a juvenile at Ballycotton, Co. Cork, on 8th October. A typical showing.

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* (3, 16, 2)

Kent Dungeness, 1st to 6th August (P. J. Grant, D. Hennessey, D. W. Taylor *et al.*).

Norfolk Salthouse and Cley, 18th to 20th May (J. McLoughlin *et al.*).

(Northeast Europe and Siberia) Another former gross rarity which has become increasingly regular here, though there has never been more than three in a year.

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* (6, 50, 7)

Avon Chew Valley Lake, adult, at least 10th October (T. A. Guyatt).

Scilly Tresco, probably juvenile, at least 6th October (M. S. Chapman, R. J. Fairbank, C. D. R. Heard *et al.*).

Staffordshire Belvide Reservoir, 18th May (J. J. Holian, W. J. Low, D. Smallshire *et al.*) (plate 204).

204. Adult summer Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia*, Staffordshire, May 1982 (W. J. Low)

Western Isles Hirta, St Kilda, 22nd to 23rd May (A. Bennett, J. J. Gordon).

Yorkshire, South Wath Ings, 24th to 25th May (N. W. Addey, J. Hewitt *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 75: plate 149, where incorrectly given as North Yorkshire).

1978 Scilly St Agnes, 15th to at least 25th August (*Brit. Birds* 72: 524), last seen 29th; Tresco, 17th to 18th September (*Brit. Birds* 75: 524), last seen 21st.

1980 Cheshire Sandbach Flashes, juvenile, 14th to 17th September (D. H. Hands, D. Norbury, A. R. Pay *et al.*), omitted in error from previous reports.

(North America) Ireland had its third and fourth records: one at Clonakilty, Co. Cork, from 7th October to December and one at Ballynatray, Co. Wexford, from 2nd to 20th November. Seven equals the previous peak in 1978, but the Staffordshire and South Yorkshire records could conceivably relate to the same individual. The Clonakilty record suggests another case of overwintering.

Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor* (1, 144, 3)

Devon Northam Burrows, 10th August (Miss R. A. Ford, P. R. Godfrey).

Shetland Fetlar, ♂, 27th May to 1st June (D. Bird, D. W. Burns, S. R. Cale *et al.*).

1981 Orkney Birsay Bay, 3rd September (Sunniva Green, J. B. Ribbands).

(North America) One in Ireland, at Ballycotton, Co. Cork, from 21st September to 2nd October. Three in one year is the poorest total since 1969.

By recent standards, the 1982 total of at least 67 American waders of ten species (excluding Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*) is relatively unexceptional and is in marked contrast to the record showing of about 30 American landbirds (see page 527).

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* (2, 30, 0)

Gloucestershire Near Frampton-on-Severn, first-year, 2nd January (A. H. Brampton), presumed same as Slimbridge individual, 30th December 1981 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 506).

1981 Cleveland Seal Sands, adult, 21st to 22nd June (M. A. Blick *et al.*).

(North America and the Caribbean) The first blank year (for new arrivals) since 1973. There is also a late record, the second for Ireland, of a second-summer, moulting into third-winter/adult plumage, at Shannon Airport Lagoon, Co. Clare, from 25th June to 21st August 1981.

Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* (0, 6, 1)

Cornwall Millbrook Lake, first-winter, 5th to 7th February (S. M. Christophers, R. Smaldon *et al.*), same as Devon individual.

Devon Plymouth, first-winter, 22nd January to at least 11th February (discontinuously) (*Brit. Birds* 75: plate 63; see also fig. 7); again 21st to 24th March (P. Aley, B. Field, P. D. Kemp *et al.*).

Dorset Radipole, first-winter/first-summer, 29th April to 7th May (R. A. Ford, I. R. Machin *et al.*), presumed same as Cornwall/Devon individual.

1976 Norfolk West Runton, 29th October (*Brit. Birds* 71: 506; 72: 476-478); with better understanding of specific characters, this record now considered unacceptable to this Committee and has been withdrawn by observer.



Fig. 7. First-winter Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan*, Devon, January 1982 (D. N. Bakewell)

(North America) The spring movement of the well-watched Devon/Cornwall bird, to Dorset, mirrors that of the first-winter Bonaparte's Gull *L. philadelphia*, which moved from Penzance to Weymouth in 1981 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 506). This obviously suggests that many of the spring Ring-billed Gulls *L. delawarensis* which turn up in Weymouth have also wintered farther west.

Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia* (11, 27, 4)

Cornwall Penzance, adult, 27th March (R. Allison, P. Finch, P. D. Kemp *et al.*); first-winter, 27th March to 21st April (R. Allison, P. Finch, P. D. Kemp *et al.*).

Merseyside Seaforth, adult, 23rd to 24th April (K. Rigby, P. Wilkinson, C. Wormwell).

Shetland Fetlar, adult, 25th June to 11th July (J. N. Dymond, M. J. Ware *et al.*) (plate 205).



205. Adult summer Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia*, Shetland, June/July 1982 (J. N. Dymond)

1981 Dorset Lodmoor and Radipole area, 2nd to 7th April and 22nd May to 8th June (*Brit. Birds* 75: 506), also 15th to 16th April (M. Cade).

(North America) Surprisingly, four is a new peak for this species.

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*

(North America) The numerous records of this species in 1981 and 1982 will be published in next year's report. (There is no truth in the rumour that this is because the Secretary is saving up for new batteries for his calculator!)

Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea* (2, 31, 1)

Shetland Scalloway and area, adult, 26th December to 5th February 1983 (M. S. Chapman *et al.*).

1981 Shetland Baltasound, Unst, adult, 22nd to 24th January (C. R. Kightley, I. Sandison *et al.*). Quendale, Mainland, adult, 28th to 31st January (C. R. Kightley *et al.*). Both additional to those already published (*Brit. Birds* 75: 509).

(Northeast Siberia, Greenland and Canada) There are also two additional Irish records for 1981: single adults at Portavogie, Co. Down, on 1st and 2nd January and at Ramore Head, Co. Antrim, on 1st and 2nd February. The four late records for 1981 bring the total for that year to a record eight, the previous highest being five in 1976. The more typical singleton in 1982 means that Ross's Gulls have been seen here in nine consecutive years, and they have now become more frequent than Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea*. Shetland and northeast England have had most records (11 and 12 respectively).

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* (53, 153, 11)

Devon Dawlish Warren, 24th July (M. A. Colley).

Hampshire Warsash, 10th May (D. A. Christie). Pennington Marsh, 11th July (M. C. & P. Combridge).

Norfolk Mundesley, adult, 15th August (K. Bailey, M. Fiszser).

Sussex, East Beachy Head, seven (1 & 3), moving east, 13th May (B. E. Cooper, R. K. Haggard, T. W. Parmenter).

1967 Scilly Treco, 3rd June (*Brit. Birds* 61: 345), withdrawn by observer.

1980 Norfolk Titchwell, 7th to 26th July (*Brit. Birds* 75: 510), also 27th (I. K. Dawson).

(Almost cosmopolitan, nearest breeding colony in Denmark) A good total, due of course to the seven which passed Beachy Head. There used to be a regular spring passage along the Kent/Sussex coast (particularly off Selsey Bill) in the early 1960s, but, despite regular watching, this has petered out since 1967.

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* (30, 120, 6)

Cambridgeshire Little Paxton Gravel-pits, 1st and 3rd August: presumed same, Gralham Water, 2nd and 3rd (M. Burton, R. F. Porter *et al.*), and Huntingdon, 4th (J. S. Hargreaves).

Dumfries & Galloway Castle Douglas, 8th to 10th July (R. G. Hawley, Miss J. Howie).

Humberside Blacktoft Sands, 24th June (A. Grieve).

Suffolk Livermore, 8th August (T. B. Bamber).

Surrey Staines Reservoirs, 11th August (A. V. Moon, P. Naylor).

Western Isles Sound of Barra, 9th June (A. Strand).

1981 Cleveland Long Drag Pool, 12th July (G. Icton).

(Cosmopolitan except South America, but everywhere local) A typical showing.

Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri* (0, 1, 2)

Cornwall River Lynher, first-winter, 4th to 8th October (S. C. & Mrs P. S. Madge *et al.*).

(North America) Ireland had its first in 1982: a first-winter in Dublin Bay from 21st November until February 1983. It seems remarkable that these two should occur so soon after the first British record, in Cornwall, in February and March 1980 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 55-61). It is also surprising that, like the first one in Cornwall, the Irish individual should choose to spend the winter here.

Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus* (3, 4, 1)

Cornwall St Ives, probably first-winter, 14th October (B. K. Mellow *et al.*).

(Oceanic islands from the Caribbean east to the Philippines and Australia) The first five were all dead, but now three live ones have occurred in the last four years. This year's was seen in a remarkable sea-watch which included, amongst other things, a strong claim (still under consideration) of Britain's first South Polar Skua *Stercorarius maccormicki* (*Brit. Birds* 76: 48).

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* (50, 403, 15)

Avon Chew Valley Lake, adult, 20th July (N. A. & Mrs L. A. Tucker); adult, 18th September (A. H. Davies, P. J. Hopkins *et al.*); juvenile, 20th to 23rd September (A. J. Merritt, K. E. Vinicombe, A. D. V. Whatley *et al.*).

Cornwall Hayle, juvenile, 22nd September and 1st October (R. Allison, P. D. Kemp *et al.*); same, Sennen, 22nd September to 1th October (S. C. Hutchings, L. P. Williams *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 76: plates 15 & 16).

Dorset Radipole, juvenile, 24th to 30th September (M. Cade, G. Walbridge *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 75: plate 236).

Essex West Thurrock, juvenile, 7th August (C. Caley, R. R. Hamilton, Miss A. Wing *et al.*); Abberton Reservoir, juvenile, 5th to 6th October (G. B. Brown *et al.*).

Humberside Blacktoft Sands, juvenile, 20th September (A. Grieve).

Lancashire Martin Mere, 31st May (S. L. Jackson, B. A. Woolley *et al.*).

Merseyside Hilbre, juvenile, 2nd to 3rd October (D. R. Coan, C. M. Poole, S. A. Stirrup *et al.*).

Norfolk Cley, adult, 13th July (J. J. Johnson *et al.*).

Shetland Walls, 13th or 14th to at least 16th May (D. Coutts, C. Jamieson, R. Johnson).

Suffolk Benacre, adult, 21th June (A. Botwright).

Warwickshire Draycote Water, juvenile, 18th September (A. R. Dean, P. J. Finden).

Wiltshire Cotswold Water Park, first-winter, 21th to 30th September (G. L. Webber *et al.*).

1974 Cheshire Sandbach, 30th June (P. F. Atherton, J. P. Guest *et al.*).

1980 Merseyside Bebbington, juvenile, 17th September (M. A. & T. G. Roberts).

(Southeast Europe, west and east Asia) A fairly average year. This species has been annual in Avon/Somerset since 1966.

Brünnich's Guillemot *Uria lomvia* (3, 13, 1)

Highland Brora, Sutherland, dead, 3rd February (A. R. Mainwood).

(Circumpolar Arctic) A typical record: only two of the last 14 have been alive. Would-be observers desperate to see this species would be well advised to scour a northern tide-wrack armed with a bicycle pump.

Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius* (6, 18, 2)

Cornwall Near Wadebridge, 7th April (Mr & Mrs R. Hamlyn).

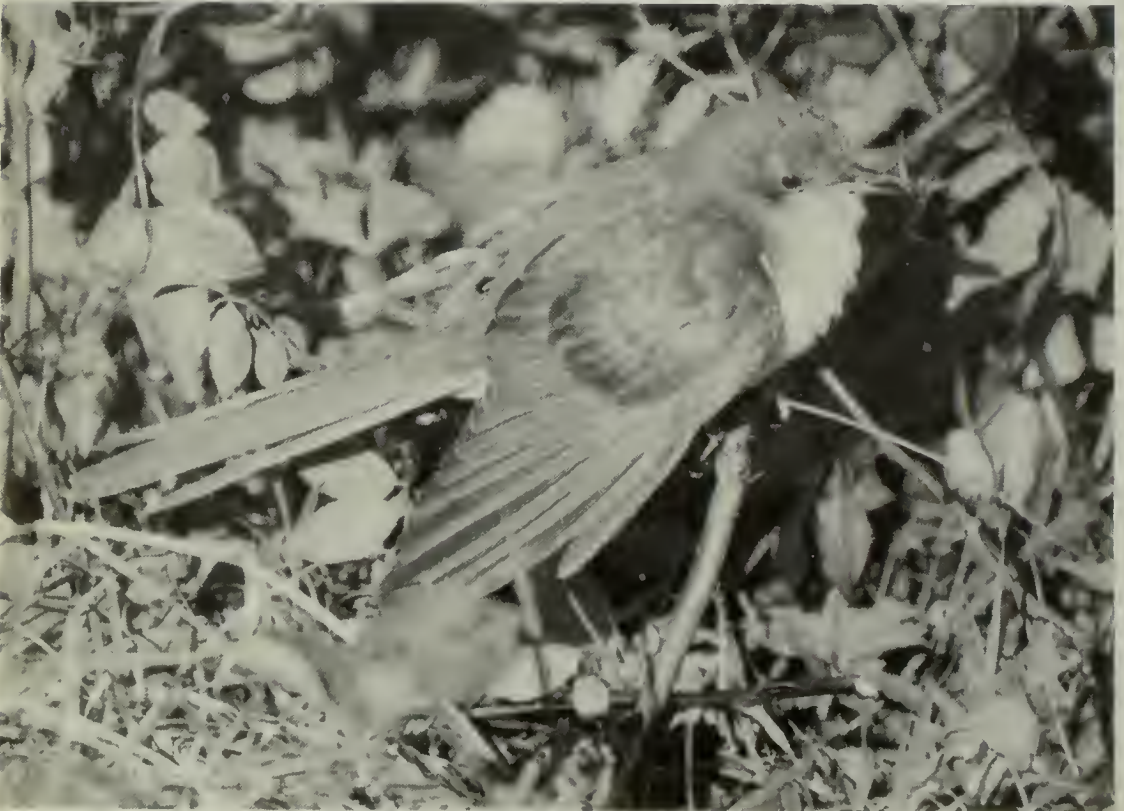
Humberside Near Easington, juvenile, 16th October to at least 6th November (N. A. Bell, G. Neal *et al.*).

(South Europe, southwest Asia and Africa) Also, one on Alderney, Channel Islands, on 14th February. Although there are two previous March records, this bird was exceptionally early, but its arrival coincided with a very mild southerly airstream blowing right up from North Africa, where it occasionally winters. The long-staying Humberside individual was the first to remain into November, and its survival here is in marked contrast to the fatalistic streak shown by our other two vagrant cuckoos.

Black-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus erythrophthalmus* (4, 3, 2)

Scilly St Agnes, juvenile, 29th August, found dead, 30th (F. H. D. Hicks, D. B. Hunt,

206. Black-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*, Scilly, October 1982 (David Constantine)



J. Keeling), St Mary's, 21st to 23rd October, found dead, 24th (N. Davidson, I. Prophet *et al.*) (plate 206). Both skins in possession of D. B. Hunt.

(North America) Two other records, in Devon and in Merseyside, are still under consideration. Assuming that these are also accepted, 1982 was a remarkable year, considering that there are only seven previous records. The first Scilly individual was exceptionally early, but it was the second that caused the most excitement. After its discovery, it mysteriously vanished and, even though the island was methodically scoured by several hundred observers, it was two days before it was rediscovered (by an islander), cowering in a flower bed in a Hugh Town garden! The ensuing panic, elation and sheer sense of relief were tempered to some extent by the fact that the bird itself, clearly on its last legs, presented such a pathetic sight to its huge gang of admirers.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus* (22, 19, 0)

1981 Yorkshire South Armthorpe, first-winter, moribund, 14th November, now at Doncaster Museum (per M. Limbert).

(North America) In view of the two (probably four) Black-billed Cuckoos *C. erythrophthalmus*, it seems odd that no Yellow-billed was found in 1982.

Scops Owl *Otus scops* (64, 13, 1)

Wiltshire Upton Scudamore, 6th to 7th June (Sir A. Gray), and Warminster area, 13th to 14th July (M. R. & Mrs S. J. Beer, D. J. Kjaer, J. D. Pollard *et al.*).

(South Europe, Russia, west Asia and northwest Africa) These records are assumed to relate to one individual.

Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca* (many, 189, 1)

Orkney Evie, Mainland, ♀, 27th June (Mrs. A. J. Perry).

Shetland Fetlar, present throughout year, adult ♀♀ only: three, January to 15th June and 3rd September to December, four, 24th May, two, occasionally three, 16th June to 2nd September (J. N. Dymond *et al.*). Unst, up to two ♀♀ frequently 7th May to 7th June, from Fetlar (I. Spence), Ronas Hill, Mainland, ♀, 14th August (S. J. & J. A. Riley).

(Circumpolar Arctic) The Shetland birds are assumed to be veterans of previous years.

Common Nighthawk *Chordeiles minor* (3, 6, 1)

Scilly St Agnes, immature, 20th October to 4th November (A. R. Dean *et al.*).

(North America) For the St Mary's contingent, the morning after this bird's arrival will be remembered for an eerie pre-dawn boat trip and a starlit stomp through a sleeping St Agnes, followed by an absolutely stunning dawn performance as this amazing bird hawked up and down the beach in the delightful setting of Porth Warna Bay. Although the eighth to be recorded in the islands, there is little doubt that, for many people, this bird will be regarded as the outstanding highlight of the 1982 'Scilly Season'.

Pacific Swift *Apus pacificus* (0, 1, 0)

1981 At sea North Sea Shell B. T. gas platform, Leman Bank, 53° 06' N 02° 12' E, about 45 km northeast of Happisburgh, Norfolk, caught exhausted, 19th June, released Beccles, Norfolk, same day; seen Shadingfield area, 20th (M. Parker, R. Walden, C. S. Waller).

(Asia from Kamchatka west to northern India) 'Pacific Swift' is the name adopted by the BOU Records Committee as best to distinguish this species from all other 'fork-tailed' and 'white-rumped' swifts. This first European record was totally unexpected.

Alpine Swift *Apus melba* (150, 170, 6)

Cornwall Kynance Cove, 10th April (Dr K. A. Francis).

Kent Dungeness, 9th April (B. Banson *et al.*), also in East Sussex. Botany Bay area, 26th September to 1st October (D. G. Gilbert, C. H. Hindle, F. Solly *et al.*).

Man Calf of Man, 13th June (A. J. Del-Nevo, N. J. Thomas *et al.*).

Suffolk Rendlesham, 4th July (R. E. Clarke).

Sussex, East Rye, 9th April (G. L. & N. J. Champion, K. L. D. Hickman *et al.*), presumed same as Dungeness individual. Brighton, 14th April (K. Noble).

1979 Strathclyde Masonhill, Ayrshire, 3rd November (T. M. & Mrs D. Cameron).

1981 Grampian (*Brit. Birds* 75: 512), locality should read Banchory-Devenick.

(South Eurasia, northwest and east Africa) A rather average year. One in Greater London on 11th November 1975 (*Brit. Birds* 70: 448) is the only other November record since 1958.

Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* (154, 134, 9)

Cornwall St Mawes, 13th May (Eileen Hitchcock). Porthgwarra, 15th May (S. M. Christophers, B. K. Mellow, L. Webb). RAF Station, Portreath, 4th July (R. L. Mason).

Dorset Portland, two, 14th June (D. E. Woodberry).

Humberside Spurn, 20th May (M. E. Blunt, K. Denny).

Kent Westcliffe, 13th June (D. Beadle).

Orkney Rousay, 7th June (A. J. Deverell, P. E. Wagstaffe).

Shetland Fair Isle, 4th to 6th June (N. J. Riddiford, Miss A. Seddon *et al.*).

1974 Norfolk Cley, 20th July (S. K. Welch).

1981 Humberside Spurn, 14th May (B. R. Spence).

(South Europe, southwest Asia and northwest Africa) Quite a good spring influx, but most people had to wait another year before they could add this evasive species to their British lists.

Roller *Coracias garrulus* (135, 67, 3)

Borders Peel, Selkirkshire, adult, 28th June to 3rd July (A. Glendinning, M. Little, R. D. Murray *et al.*).

Cheshire Wildboardclough, 2nd to 4th June (C. P. McPherson *et al.*).

Cumbria Near Bassenthwaite Lake, Cumberland, 25th to 29th September (J. Callion, R. Downes, Mr & Mrs Wharton).

Lancashire Blackpool, 30th September (E. Stirling).

1973 Norfolk Little Milton, dead, 24th September, now at Norwich Museum (E. G. Grant).

(South and east Europe, west Asia and northwest Africa) A typical showing. The Cumbria and Lancashire individuals are counted as the same in the totals.

Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* (40, 199, 9)

Cornwall Sennen, 3rd October (J. H. Johns, L. P. Williams).

Scilly Tresco, 20th September to 7th October (J. W. Houghton, D. B. Hunt, M. J. Scott-Ham *et al.*). St Mary's, two, 2nd October (D. Bird, D. W. Burns *et al.*). Another, 20th to 21st (G. Ellwanger, D. Oelkers *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, 16th to 18th September (P. Aley, S. J. Cox *et al.*); another, 25th to 28th (N. J. Riddiford *et al.*). Scousborough, 27th to 30th September (J. N. Dymond).

Suffolk Benacre, 11th September (D. R. Moore, P. M. Murray *et al.*).

1977 Scilly St Martins, 30th September to 8th October, two, 1st to 8th (*Brit. Birds* 71: 511), one remained to 9th.

1978 Scilly Gugh, 25th to 27th April (*Brit. Birds* 72: 530), again, 28th (J. D. Saunders *et al.*).

1981 Northumberland Farne Islands, 10th to 11th May (G. Crook, K. Miller).

(South Eurasia, north and east Africa) A fairly typical year. One wonders how many must go undetected in arable fields between Shetland and Scilly.

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata* (13, 5, 1)

Gwynedd Bardsey, 5th to 6th June (D. Kerridge, P. J. Roberts, D. Suddaby).

(Continental Europe south from Baltic, south Asia, northwest and upland equatorial Africa) Although a very familiar bird in the Mediterranean, its occurrences in this country are extremely erratic. This was the first since 1975.

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* (7, 73, 1)

Hertfordshire Hilfield Park Reservoir, 18th May (C. I. Bushell).

1979 Scilly Bryher, 14th April, and Treco, 17th to at least 23rd (*Brit. Birds* 73: 517), again Bryher, 5th May (per D. B. Hunt).

1980 Essex Abberton Reservoir, at least 7th to 10th May (*Brit. Birds* 74: 480), again 11th (I. K. Dawson).

1980 Shetland Clickimin Loch, 15th May (D. Coutts, D. Turner *et al.*).

1981 Cornwall Hayle, 21st April (D. Wood).

(South and east Eurasia, and Africa) There is also a late record of one at Hillhead Crossroads, Castledown, Co. Derry, on 18th November 1980, the second Irish record. Like 1981, a poor year. Although a seemingly straightforward species, hybrids between Swallow *H. rustica* and House Martin *Delichon urbica* have been recorded (*Brit. Birds* 66: 398-400), so the Committee is adopting a fairly critical approach to birds that are poorly or briefly seen.

Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae* (135, 982, 38)

Cornwall Rame Head, 29th March (P. D. Kemp).

Dorset Portland, two, 5th October (M. Rogers, D. Walker *et al.*), Winspit, 23rd October (M. C. & P. Combridge).

Dyfed Skokholm, 10th October (J. Daniels, G. G. & Mrs E. G. Ginn).

Kent Forncess, 20th September (D. Beadle, I. P. Hodgson, I. D. Hunter *et al.*); at least three, 22nd October (K. Lord, F. Solly), possibly one of same, 25th (F. Solly), Sandwich Bay, 23rd October (D. M. Batchelor).

Lincolnshire Donna Nook, single sightings, 27th October, 29th to 1st November, 8th to 20th (S. Lorand), Northcoates Point, 31st October to 7th November (H. Bunn, G. P. Catley *et al.*).

Norfolk Holme, 29th September (K. B. Shepherd), Morston, 3rd October (G. E. Dunmore), Sheringham, 12th October (Dr P. G. Kitchener); 23rd (Dr M. P. Taylor), East Runton, 18th to 19th October; considered same, 20th to 29th November and 1st December; another, 27th to 28th November; one of same, Cromer, 29th (M. P. Lee, Dr M. P. Taylor, T. Wright), Winterton/Horsey/Waxham area, single sightings, 7th, 15th, 24th and 31st October, 6th November, two, 30th October (P. R. Allard *et al.*).

Scilly St Mary's, 3rd to 7th October (R. J. Fairbank, R. B. Hastings, A. V. Moon *et al.*); 20th to 24th, two, 20th to 21st (E. Basterfield *et al.*); another, 27th to at least 4th November (D. F. & J. M. Hurley, C. Rogers *et al.*), St Martin's, 22nd October (M. J. Rogers *et al.*) and Treco, 23rd (W. F. Peplow), both presumed one of St Mary's individuals, Gugh, 19th October (N. Crook, P. R. Holness, M. G. W. Terry), possibly also from St Mary's.

Shetland Fair Isle, 23rd to 28th September (J. M. Dickson, Miss J. Lugg, G. A. Tyler); 10th to 13th October (N. J. Riddiford *et al.*), Out Skerries, 23rd to 29th September (D. M. Pullan, E. Tait *et al.*); another, 25th (P. M. Ellis, D. M. Pullan, E. Tait); 7th to 8th October (P. Fisher, D. M. Pullan, E. Tait), Spiggie, 23rd to 25th October (J. N. Dymond).

1981 Kent Ramsgate, 21st to 23rd October (F. Solly, M. P. Sutherland *et al.*).

1981 Lincolnshire Saltfleetby, 18th October (*Brit. Birds* 75: 514), first seen 17th (per G. P. Catley).

1981 Merseyside Near Thurstaston, 9th to 12th November (C. D. R. Jones *et al.*).

1981 Norfolk Holkham, 15th October; another, 25th (J. B. Kemp). Waxham, 16th October (S. C. Joyner), Salthouse, two, at least 18th to 21st October (*Brit. Birds* 75: 514), two, 17th (J. A. Ginnever, S. P. Singleton *et al.*).

1981 Scilly St Mary's, 15th October (B. C. & R. W. Forrester, P. A. Harvey *et al.*).

1981 Yorkshire, North Filey Brigg, 7th October (P. J. Dunn).

(West Siberia east to Mongolia and southeast to New Zealand, also Africa) Also, one on Cape Clear, Co. Cork, from 1st to 12th October. A fairly typical total, but well down on the 100-plus years of 1967, 1968 and 1970.

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris* (120, 483, 17)

Avon Chew Valley Lake, 2nd October (N. A. Lethaby, A. F. Silcocks).

Cornwall Craithole, 15th to 16th September; another, 16th to 19th (S. C. & Mrs P. S. Madge).

Dorset Portland, four: 21st September (M. Rogers, G. Walbridge, D. Walker); 28th (G. Walbridge); 1st October (G. Walbridge, D. Walker); 3rd (D. E. Paull, D. Walker).

Glamorgan, Mid Sker Point, 7th September (G. J. A. Burton, M. Coath, G. M. Haig).

Hampshire Hayling Island, 9th October (J. M. Walters).

Kent Foreness, 3rd May (F. Solly). Sandwich Bay, 30th May (M. P. Sutherland). Cliffsend, 11th September (D. Beadle).

Scilly St Mary's, 1st October (R. J. Fairbank, P. Naylor).

Shetland Fair Isle, 22nd May (J. M. Dickson).

Suffolk Landguard, 16th September (C. P. S. Ruffles).

Sussex, West Ovingdean, two, 3rd October (N. A. G. Lord).

1981 Dorset Portland, 10th September (J. K. Archer, A. F. Silcocks), previously rejected (*Brit. Birds* 75: 532), now accepted after review.

(Europe, south Asia and northwest Africa) There were also four on the Channel Islands: two at St Ouen, Jersey, on 14th September; one at L'Ancrese, Guernsey, on 17th September and one at Jerbourg, Guernsey, on 12th October. By recent standards, another below-average year.

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* (1, 22, 3)

Cleveland Redcar, at least 13th October (D. J. Britton).

Scilly St Mary's, 25th to at least 26th October (P. R. Davey, D. J. Holman *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, 12th to 15th October, trapped 12th and 14th (N. J. Riddiford *et al.*).

1980 Scilly St Mary's, 28th October (*Brit. Birds* 74: 482), again 29th.

(Northeast Russia to central and east Asia) Although recorded only four times before 1973, these three continue the unbroken run since then.

Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus* (30, 127, 3)

Essex Rainham, 1st to 2nd May (J. White *et al.*).

Norfolk Cley, 18th to 19th May (J. B. Kemp *et al.*).

Suffolk Trinley Lake, Felixstowe, 15th May (C. M. & J. R. Askins, H. Lee, M. C. Marsh).

1968 Kent Dungeness, 18th September (M. J. Rogers *et al.*), previously rejected (*Brit. Birds* 62: 192), now accepted after review.

1975 Northumberland Low Hauxley, 19th October (E. R. Meek, S. Roddis), previously rejected (*Brit. Birds* 70: 453), now accepted after review.

1975 Scilly St Agnes, two, 11th October (P. J. Grant, R. E. Turley), previously rejected (*Brit. Birds* 70: 453), now accepted after review.

1976 Norfolk Blakeney Point, 28th August (S. C. Joyner *et al.*), previously rejected (*Brit. Birds* 72: 518), now accepted after review.

1980 Scilly St Mary's, 19th October (T. Bond, R. B. Hastings, A. V. Moon *et al.*), previously rejected (*Brit. Birds* 74: 494), now accepted on new evidence.

1981 Merseyside Hoylake, 1th October (J. G. & S. J. Jones).

1981 At sea North Sea Gas platform Beryl A, 59° 33' N 01° 32' E, about 131 km east of Fair Isle, 29th May (A. W. Wallis).

(Arctic Eurasia) A small spring influx, but no autumn records for the first time since 1978. The reviewed records relate mainly to a reappraisal of birds identified on call.

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* (2, 31, 1)

Cornwall Hayle, immature, 22nd to 23rd September (S. M. Whitehouse *et al.*).

(Northeast and east Russia, west Siberia and west and central Asia) Two late records, from Ballycotton, Co. Cork, during 15th to 17th October 1968 and 6th to 12th September 1980, constitute the first for Ireland. A Fair Isle record, together with a number of others from previous years, remain under consideration.

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia* (2, 45, 0)

1981 Grampian Newburgh, dead, 12th May (*Brit. Birds* 75: 516), skin retained by Dr A. G. Knox.

1981 Highland Noss Farm, Wick, Caithness, trapped, 12th May (K. W. Banks, H. Clark, S. G. Mackay) (additional to one trapped previous day: *Brit. Birds* 75: 516).

(Scandinavia, east Europe and west Asia) A disappointing blank year for this potential colonist (cf. *Brit. Birds* 70: 348-349; 75: 572).

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* (0, 1, 0)

An individual showing characters of one of the eastern races *ochruros-semirufus-phoenicuroides* was recorded as follows:

1981 Kent Dungeness, first-year ♂, 7th to 8th November, trapped 7th (D. Buffery, P. J. Grant, L. M. Wickens *et al.*).

(Caucasus, Asia Minor, northern Middle East, northern Afghanistan and eastwards) This is the first time that one of the eastern orange-bellied races has been recorded in Britain.

Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* (1, 56, 5)

Individuals showing characters of one or other of the eastern races *S. t. maura* or *stejnegeri*, colloquially known as 'Siberian Stonechats', were recorded as follows:

Cornwall Trevoze Head, ♀ or immature, 4th November (S. M. Christophers, L. Webb).

Grampian Rattray Head, ♀ or immature, 9th to 15th October (K. B. Shepherd *et al.*).

Shetland Out Skerries, ♀ or immature, 6th October (D. M. Pullan *et al.*). Whalsay, ♂, 24th to 25th October (Dr B. Marshall, I. S. Robertson). Sumburgh, ♀ or immature, 9th November (M. S. Chapman).

1981 Humberside Flamborough Head, ♀ or immature, 29th October (P. A. Doherty, V. A. Lister *et al.*).

(White Sea, eastwards across Siberia) 'Siberian' Stonechats have now been annual since 1974, but, in view of the large numbers of other Asian passerines, it is perhaps surprising that there were not more in 1982.

White's Thrush *Zoothera dauma* (29, 10, 0)

1965 Scilly Tresco, 3rd to 4th November (D. B. Hunt), previously rejected (*Brit. Birds* 59: 303), now accepted after review.

(Northern and central Siberia) This remains a very erratic and highly sought-after vagrant. (Let us hope that the above observer remembers the Committee's generous change of heart when he is serving behind the bar of the Porthcressa in Scilly.)

Grey-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus* (1, 13, 2)

Shetland Voe, 19th to 20th October (C. Robson *et al.*).

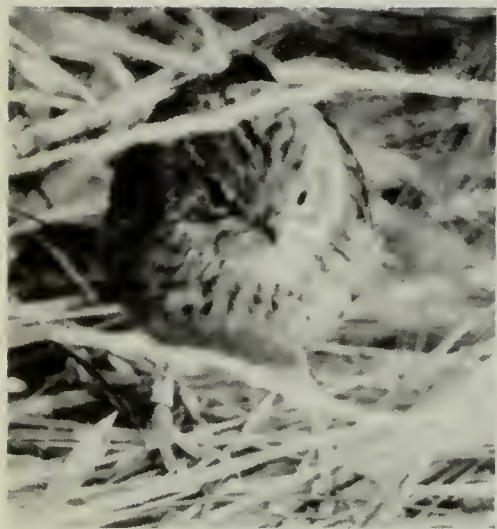
(North America) Ireland had its long-overdue first record: one trapped on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, on 19th October (plate 216).

Black-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* (3, 8, 2)

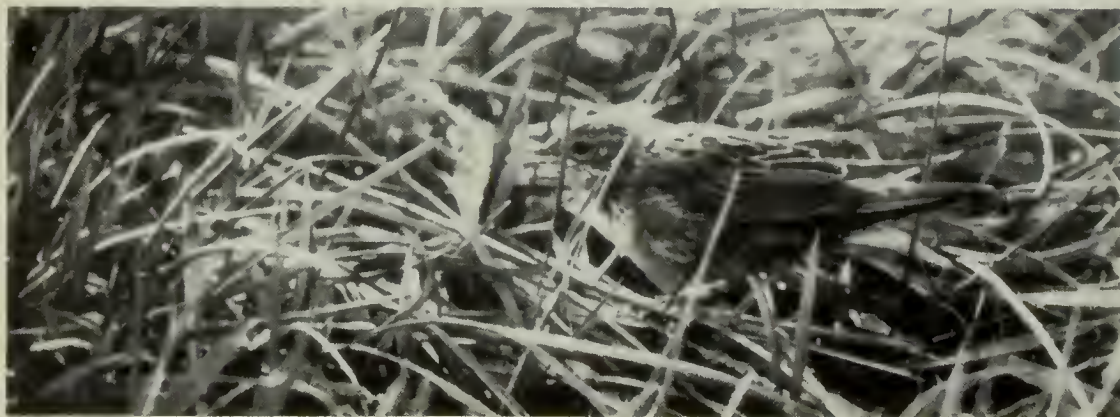
Scilly St Mary's, ♀ or immature, *T. r. atrogularis*, 7th to 14th October (A. G. Goodwin, J. D. Hall *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, ♂, *T. r. atrogularis*, 13th October (J. N. Dymond, Miss A. Prior).

(Central Asia) There were only three records before 1958, but now ten have occurred in the last nine years, with only 1980 failing to produce one. Of the previous 11, six have been in Scotland and three on the east coast of England, so the much-watched Scilly television star created a great deal of excitement, not to mention frustration as, like the Black-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus erythrophthalmus* (pages 502-503), it somehow managed to lose itself for three days after its initial discovery.



207-209. First-winter Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata*, Shetland, September 1982
(Andrew Moon)



American Robin *Turdus migratorius* (11, 13, 2)**Devon** Lundy, age uncertain, 14th to 18th November (K. A. Mortimer).**Shetland** Foula, ♂, 3rd to 16th November (Mrs S. Gear *et al.*).**1981 Highland** Reay, Caithness, adult, 5th November (Dr D. M. Edge, E. W. E. Maughan).

(North America) It would, perhaps, have been surprising if this colourful thrush had not turned up during such a good American passerine year. These were Lundy's third and Foula's second, the latter almost exactly 15 years after the island's first.

Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* (9, 19, 3)**Shetland** Fair Isle, three, all first-winter: 13th to 15th September, trapped 13th (N. J. Riddiford *et al.*); 23rd to 24th September, trapped 23rd (R. B. Hastings, A. V. Moon, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*) (plates 207-209); trapped, 6th October (N. J. Riddiford *et al.*).

(East Eurasia from central Russia to north Japan) Three typical records. Although unrecorded from 1962 to 1971 inclusive, 19 have been seen since, mainly on Fair Isle. When discovered, the second 1982 bird was grovelling around milk pails on the observatory doorstep and, after strutting around the observatory trap enclosure like a miniature Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*, walked up the ramp of the trap and straight into the catching-box!

River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis* (0, 6, 2)**Shetland** Fair Isle, first-year, trapped, 22nd September (D. G. Borton, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*); adult, 24th to 26th September, trapped 24th (M. Parr, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*) (plate 210).

210. Adult River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis*, Shetland, September 1982 (John Hewitt)

(Central and east Europe and west-central Asia) After the original three, in 1961 and 1969 (two), there have now been five in the last two years. With population increases in Denmark and Sweden (*Brit. Birds* 73: 260, 577; 75: 28) we can hopefully look forward to more-regular appearances here. Observers of this species should bear in mind the possibility of confusion with Savi's Warbler *L. luscinoides* of the darker eastern race *fusca*.

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinoides* (many, 360, 22)**Dorset** Lodmoor, ♂, 6th to 16th May (M. Cade *et al.*).**Kent** Stour valley, two sites: (1) one-two ♂♂, 15th to 27th April, one 3rd July; (2) ♂, 13th April, two from 15th, last heard 2nd July (per A. C. B. Henderson).

Norfolk Locality A, four ♂♂, April; up to six pairs nested. Locality C, ♂, June (per M. J. Seago).

Suffolk Locality A, ♂, 25th April to 6th May, no evidence of breeding. Locality B, ♂, 15th May onwards; pair probably bred (per D. R. Moore).

1978 Dorset Lodmoor, ♂, 28th to 30th April (C. I. Bushell, R. R. Drew *et al.*).

(Europe, west and central Asia and northwest Africa) No records away from traditional areas.

Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola* (47, 546, 15)

Cornwall Marazion, 5th September (R. M. Belringer, M. P. Frost *et al.*).

Devon Countess Wear, 5th September (F. R. Smith).

Dorset Lodmoor, about nine: 11th August; 15th to 18th (M. Cade); trapped 22nd; two trapped 23rd; trapped 26th (J. Boyall, T. Squire, the late P. J. Tullett); trapped, 1st September (P. D. Christian, the late P. J. Tullett); 4th September; 17th; 12th October (M. Cade).

Glamorgan, Mid Kenfig Pool, 11th to 12th August, trapped 11th (S. J. Moon *et al.*).

Gwynedd Bardsey, 31st July (G. Gray, D. Suddaby, B. Williams).

Somerset Steart, trapped, 26th August; trapped, 27th (A. W. Evans, B. Rabbitts).

1980 Shetland Sumburgh, 16th August (D. Coutts, D. M. Pullan).

1981 Kent Dungeness, 20th September (M. H. Davies).

(East Europe and Urals) Another unexceptional showing.

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola* (2, 5, 1)

Cumbria South Walney, first-year, 11th to 13th September, trapped 11th (T. Dean, K. Parkes *et al.*) (plate 211).



211. First-year Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola*, Cumbria, September 1982 (John T. Belsey)

(South Russia and Asia) Another of the autumn's big crowd-pullers, and the first for northwest England.

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* (23, 104, 3)

Cambridgeshire Ouse Washes, in song, 7th to 9th July (N. Ellis, R. Green, S. Rooke *et al.*).

Devon Prawle Point, 15th May (D. J. Hopkins, J. C. Nicholls, Mr & Mrs J. Woodland).

Kent Elmley, in song, 29th May (S. A. Webb *et al.*).

(Europe, southwest and east Asia and north Africa) Another unexceptional year.



212. Killdeer *Charadrius vociferus*, Scilly, October 1982 (Tim Loseby)

213. Juvenile Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla*, Somerset, October 1982 (Nigel R. Jones)





214. Adult White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis*, Cornwall, October 1982 (David M. Cottridge)

215. Juvenile Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda*, Scilly, October 1982 (Tim Loseby)



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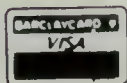


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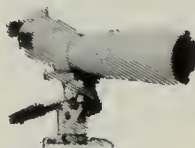
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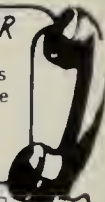


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216 & 217. Left, Grey-checked Thrush *Catharus minimus*, Co. Cork, October 1982 (Kieran Grace); right, Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi*, Flamborough Head, Humberside, October 1982 (details still on circulation to the Committee) (P. A. Doherty)

218 & 219. Left, Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus*, Co. Cork, October 1982 (Kieran Grace); right, Yellow-rumped Warbler *Dendroica coronata*, Co. Cork, October 1982 (Kieran Grace)





220. Adult male Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus*, Humberside, October 1982 (G. P. Catley)

221. Female or immature Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola*, Shetland, September 1982 (Dennis Coultts)



Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans* (12, 89, 6)**Cheshire** Near Wilmslow, 15th May (A. W. Martin).**Scilly** Samson, 16th April (D. B. Hunt). St Agnes, ♂, 13th May (D. J. & Mrs D. C. Barker *et al.*). St Mary's, ♀ or immature, 3rd to 11th October (S. D. Housden, R. E. Jones, C. W. Murphy *et al.*).**Shetland** Walls, ♀, trapped, 15th August (P. J. Ewins, P. Fisher, J. D. Okill).**1980 Scilly** St Mary's, first-winter ♀, 24th to at least 29th October (*Brit. Birds* 75: 521), last seen 2nd November.

(South Europe, west Turkey and northwest Africa) Also, a male on Great Saltee Island, Co. Wexford, on 10th May. A fairly typical showing by modern standards. Only one other has stayed later than the problematical 1980 Scilly bird: one at Hauxley, Northumberland, on 2nd and 3rd November 1963 (*Brit. Birds* 57: 273).

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala* (1, 10, 1)**Humberside** Spurn, ♂, 4th to 6th June, trapped 4th (B. R. Spence *et al.*).**1980 Norfolk** Weybourne, 1st September to 5th October (S. J. M. Gantlett, R. B. Hastings *et al.*).

(South Europe, Middle East and north Africa) Surprisingly enough, this abundant, though secretive, Mediterranean warbler has now occurred here in four consecutive years (six records). Of the total, half have turned up in April or May, and nearly all have been at well-watched coastal migration sites.

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* (13, 131, 6)**Humberside** Spurn, first-year, probably ♀, 6th to 8th September, trapped 6th, released 7th; first-year, probably ♂, 6th to 9th September, trapped 6th, released 7th (B. Banson, B. R. Spence *et al.*).**Kent** St Margaret's Bay, 27th October (P. J. Grant, A. J. Greenland, I. P. Hodgson).**Northumberland** Low Hauxley, trapped, 6th September (S. W. Anderson, M. Davison, A. Heavisides).**Shetland** Sumburgh, first-year, 24th to 30th September, trapped 30th (J. N. Dymond, P. J. Ewins, R. Hargreaves).

(Eurasia east from northern Germany) Also one in Ireland, at Hook Head, Co. Wexford, on 18th September. Badly needed reviews of old British and Irish records are being carried out by the Committee and by the Irish Records Panel.

Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis* (19, 103, 3)**Shetland** Fair Isle, trapped, 3rd July (N. J. Riddiford *et al.*); first-year, trapped, 24th August (D. G. Borton, J. M. Dickinson, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*). Whalsay, 25th September (Dr B. Marshall *et al.*).**1981 Northumberland** Low Hauxley (*Brit. Birds* 75: 523), observer was S. W. Anderson, not as stated.**1981 Shetland** Voe, 10th to 12th September (M. S. Chapman, M. Parr *et al.*).**1981 Yorkshire, North** Scarborough, adult, 15th August (P. J. Dunn, C. A. Mason).

(North Fenno-Scandia east to Alaska) A late record from Ireland involved one on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, on 5th October 1981. The three late records for 1981 bring that year's total to a remarkable 17, more than double the previous peak. The first 1982 Fair Isle bird was the earliest

ever recorded in Britain, although it recalls the one trapped at Titchwell, Norfolk, on 5th July 1975 (*Brit. Birds* 69: 250). It has never occurred in spring.

Pallas's Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus* (3, 178, 116)

Borders St Abb's Head, four: 11th to 12th October (Mrs F. Evans, R. D. Murray *et al.*); 11th to 12th (W. T. Appleyard); two, 11th and 16th (W. T. Appleyard, D. Thorne). Eyemouth, 11th October (D. Patterson). Pease Bay, 11th October (R. D. Murray).

Cleveland Hartlepool, 9th to 10th October (M. Cubitt, J. W. Mitchell *et al.*); another, 10th (M. J. Gee *et al.*). Boulby Cliffs, trapped, 10th October (W. I. Boustead, N. Jackson). South Gare, 11th October (C. Brown, E. Glode). Locke Park, two, 14th to 15th October (W. I. Boustead *et al.*).

Cornwall St Levan, 21th to 25th October (E. Griffiths, L. I. Hamilton, N. R. Phillips). Caerthilian Cove, 27th October (B. Cave, E. Grace).

Devon Prawle Point, at least four: 14th October (P. M. Mayer); 30th (R. Andrew, P. M. Mayer, J. C. Nicholls *et al.*); 30th (P. M. Mayer, J. C. Nicholls, R. D. T. Shute); 30th (R. & Mrs C. Andrew); possibly one of same, 6th November (J. C. Nicholls).

Dorset Portland, 19th October (A. R. H. Swash); 29th to 31st, trapped 29th (M. Rogers, G. Walbridge, D. Walker *et al.*). Hengistbury Head (form. Hampshire), 30th October to 1st November (P. Morrison *et al.*).

Dyfed Wooltack Point, Pembrokeshire, 30th October (A. J. Hanson).

Fife Fife Ness, three: 11th to 12th October (P. Branscombe, Dr R. W. Byrne, Prof. T. C. Smout); two, trapped, 11th (Dr M. P. Harris, T. Shannan, D. Skilling *et al.*).

Grampian Rattray Head, 9th to 10th October, trapped 9th (K. B. Shepherd *et al.*); another, 12th (S. Chester, J. Dunbar *et al.*). Girdleness, 11th to 12th October (H. Prendergast *et al.*). Cruden Bay, 13th to 14th October (S. M. Palmer). Newburgh, 14th October (N. Cobley, T. Dawson).

Humberside Spurn, three: 9th to 10th October (M. A. Hollingworth *et al.*); trapped, 15th (J. Birch, J. Cudworth *et al.*); 21st to 25th, trapped 21st (G. Neal, B. R. Spence *et al.*). Kilnsea, 28th October (S. M. Lister, M. Quinlan *et al.*). Flamborough Head: see comment below.

Kent St Margaret's, 11th October (I. P. Hodgson). Dungeness, 23rd October (N. R. Davies, M. A. Hollingworth *et al.*); another, trapped, 25th (S. McMin, A. Wheeler). Foreness, 2nd November (F. Solly).

Lincolnshire Saltfleetby, 10th to 11th October (K. Atkin, J. R. Clarkson, T. Sheard *et al.*).

Norfolk Holme, three: 9th to 11th October; two, 15th to 18th, one trapped 15th (R. E. & V. Eve *et al.*). Weybourne, 10th October (B. Reed, C. Wilbourne). Holkham, about 14: minimum daily totals, one 7th October; two, 8th; seven, 9th; nine, 10th and 15th; four, 16th; six, 17th (D. Foster, T. P. Inskipp, J. B. Kemp *et al.*).

Northumberland Bamburgh, three: trapped, 10th October (D. G. Bell, M. Bell, M. S. & Mrs A. Hodgson *et al.*); two, trapped, 12th (M. S. Hodgson, W. G. Savage *et al.*). Low Hauxley, trapped, 11th October (M. Davison *et al.*). Farne Islands, two, 11th October (J. McAllister, J. Walton). Newton Pond, 11th October (P. Corkhill, D. Woodfall). Holy Island, four: 11th October (E. T. & J. R. Morris); 11th to 12th (D. J. Britton *et al.*); another two, 11th (M. L. Denton *et al.*).

Orkney Windwick, South Ronaldsay, two, 14th to 15th October, one trapped 14th, other 15th (J. A. & R. McCutcheon, E. R. Meek, J. B. Ribbands). Rack Wick, Westray, 15th October (C. J. & Mrs. J. Booth). Berstane, Mainland, 15th October (E. R. Meek, J. B. Ribbands); another, trapped, 31st (R. G. Adam *et al.*).

Scilly St Mary's, five: 15th October (C. W. Murphy, S. Holloway *et al.*); 15th to 21st October (R. Crossley, R. Simpson *et al.*); 23rd to 24th October (C. D. R. Heard *et al.*); 23rd to 25th October (M. S. Chapman *et al.*); 6th (possibly since 3rd) November (C. Robson *et al.*). St Agnes, 15th to 18th October (H. Shorrock, Mrs M. Tout *et al.*). St Martin's, 21st October (B. C. Forrester).

Shetland Fair Isle, at least 12: trapped, 6th October, found dead 7th, now at Royal Scottish Museum (J. N. Dymond, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*); 8th (C. Robson); 10th to 11th (J. M. Dickson, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*); another nine, probably eleven, 11th; two, possibly of same, 12th (J. M. Dickson, J. N. Dymond, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*). Sullom, trapped, 9th October (J. D. Okill, R.

Wynde). Voxter, 9th to 10th October, trapped 10th (J. D. Okill, R. Wynde *et al.*); two, trapped, 16th (J. D. Okill, I. Sandison, R. Wynde *et al.*). Sumburgh, five: 12th October (D. Dickson *et al.*); 12th (M. Gibson *et al.*); 12th (D. Morton *et al.*); 12th (C. Robson *et al.*); 12th (I. Smith *et al.*). Voe, 19th to 22nd October (C. Robson); another, 20th to 22nd (J. N. Dymond, I. S. Robertson, C. Robson *et al.*). Out Skerries, 6th October (D. M. Pullan). Kergord, 9th October; another 19th (I. Sandison). Fetlar, 12th October (C. G. Thomason per J. N. Dymond). Whalsay, 10th to 11th October (Dr B. Marshall *et al.*); another, 16th (Dr B. Marshall, I. S. Robertson).

Tyne & Wear Marsden, 7th October (P. T. Bell, S. Howatt *et al.*). Seaburn, 10th October (B. S. Bates). St Mary's, 11th October (Miss W. A. Kelly). Whitburn, 11th to 12th October, three, 11th (D. A. T. Constantine, D. Foster, B. Moore *et al.*).

1981 Cleveland Hartlepool, 19th to 20th October (M. A. Blick *et al.*).

1981 Humberside Near Spurn, 18th to 24th October (A. S. Butler, J. E. Dale, P. A. Doherty *et al.*).

1981 Kent Sandwich Bay, dead, 15th November (possibly present since 6th), skin retained by I. P. Hodgson (J. H. van der Dol).

1981 At sea North Sea gas platform 19/23A, 113 km northeast of Bacton, Norfolk, moribund, 23rd October, now at British Museum (J. L. Gunn, P. R. Colston *et al.*).

(Central, east and southeast Asia) There were only three British records prior to 1958, but, since then, occurrences have gradually increased (reaching peaks of 29 in 1975 and 33 in 1981). This year's total of at least 116 can, however, only be described as absolutely staggering; even in a year bedecked with superlatives, this flying fairy light has once again managed to steal the show. At least three are still under consideration and details of at least another 13 remain unreported (including at least nine at Flamborough Head, Humberside) so the eventual total should be over 130.

The main arrival, around 11th October, coincided with hazy conditions and a light easterly airflow, as the remains of an old front stretched across the northern half of the North Sea, touching Scotland and northeast England. Earlier in the autumn, an intense anticyclone developed over western Russia and in early October it extended its influence westwards, creating ideal conditions for (a) drifting migrants out of Siberia towards western Europe and (b) encouraging migrants to leave the Baltic before hitting the disorientating cloudy conditions over the North Sea (*BTO News* 124: 6-7). The British east coast recorded some huge falls around this period, particularly of Goldcrests *Regulus regulus*; for example, there was an estimated 15,000 on the Isle of May, Fife, on 11th October (plus three or four Pallas's so far unreported; *BTO News* 124: 8).

As a result of these unusual conditions, this year's influx was unusually far to the north; for example, Fair Isle had recorded only three prior to 1982, and the rest of Shetland another five, compared with this year's combined total of 29. The arrival dates were rather later in the southwest than in the north, suggesting some onward filtration. Surprisingly, none was discovered in Ireland, whose only record was as long ago as 1968 (*Brit. Birds* 62: 481).

This amazing influx once again prompts the inevitable questions. First, what induced thousands (presumably) of these tiny birds to move 5,600 km westwards into Europe? Secondly, is this influx in any way correlated to a population explosion in Siberia? Thirdly, and perhaps most intriguing, where do they go after they leave Britain? In this respect, it seems remarkable that none has ever been recorded here in winter.

Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi* (1, 29, 11)

Humberside Spurn, trapped, 30th October (J. Cudworth, C. J. Mackenzie-Grieve *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 76: plate 9).

Norfolk Holkham Meals, 9th to 10th October (G. D. Elliott, T. P. Inskipp, C. Smith *et al.*).

Northumberland Low Hauxley, 17th to 19th October, trapped 17th (A. M. Bankier, M. Davison, B. Galloway *et al.*).

Orkney Kirkwall, trapped, 10th October (E. J. & S. J. Williams *et al.*). Holm, trapped, 17th October (E. R. & T. R. Meek *et al.*).

Scilly St Agnes, 12th to 13th October (R. Andrew, J. M. Dale, P. G. Lansdown *et al.*). St Mary's, 23rd October (R. J. Fairbank, R. E. Innes, Mrs M. White *et al.*); another, 28th (D. & J. F. Cooper).

Shetland Catfirth, trapped, 10th October (J. D. Okill *et al.*).

Tyne & Wear Whitburn, 12th October (P. Gill, T. I. Mills).

(Central and east Asia) Ireland had its first in 1982: one at Hook Head, Co. Wexford, on 30th October. Another record from Northumberland and one from Flamborough Head, Humberside (plate 217), remain under consideration, and details of a further two at Flamborough Head (*Brit. Birds* 76: 45) have not yet been submitted to the Committee. Considering that there were 30 previous records (with a peak of five in 1976), this year's total of 11 (probably 15) was astonishing. Like the Pallas's Warblers *P. proregulus*, this year's crop includes some unusually far to the north: the first records for Orkney and the second for Shetland (the species has still never been recorded on Fair Isle).

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus* (1, 30, 7)

Borders St Abb's Head, 11th to 14th October (W. T. Appleyard, Mrs F. Evans, R. D. Murray *et al.*); possibly another, 12th (D. J. Bates).

Cleveland Hartlepool, trapped, 11th October (D. Clayton, R. T. McAndrew).

Gwynedd Bardsey, trapped, 30th October (P. J. Roberts, D. Suddaby).

Norfolk Sheringham, trapped, 10th to 11th October (Dr M. P. Taylor *et al.*). Happisburgh, trapped, 3rd November (Mrs B. M. E. Unsworth).

Scilly Gugh, 23rd October (E. T. Abraham, I. M. Beggs *et al.*).

Tyne & Wear Seaburn, 11th October (B. S. Bates).

1981 Cleveland Seaton Carew, 24th to 25th October (M. A. Blick, R. E. Innes, S. C. Madge *et al.*).

(Central and northeast to southeast Asia) Like the previous two species, a tremendous year, the previous record being five, in 1968 and in 1976.

Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli* (3, 71, 2)

Norfolk Holkham Meals, 12th to 13th September (G. E. Dunmore *et al.*).

Scilly St Martin's, 10th to 13th October (J. G. Hole, C. E. Richards *et al.*).

(Central, west and south Europe, Levant and northwest Africa) The record of one on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, from 12th to 18th September 1981 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 524) was in fact at Brownstown Head, Co. Wexford, not as stated. Observers of vagrant Bonelli's Warblers should pay particular attention to the call, as the eastern race *orientalis* gives a quiet, abrupt, metallic 'chip' whereas the western race *bonelli* gives a 'poo-weet', which is more similar to the familiar call of the Willow Warbler *P. trochilus* (see *Brit. Birds* 74: 444; 76: 537).

Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla* (0, 7, 0)

(Central and south Europe, Asia Minor and north Africa) None in Britain, but a summary of this species' status in the Channel Islands is as

follows (*per* Trevor Copp): 'Alderney: very few; Guernsey: common in suitable habitat; Jersey: common; Sark: uncommon, with marked decline in last four years, but not much suitable habitat. Resident.'

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* (0, 6, 0)

Humberside Blacktoft Sands, probably first-year ♂ and first-year ♀, first seen 25th November 1981, to at least 4th January (*Brit. Birds* 75: 524).

(Scattered from western Europe east to Manchuria) With the recent colonisation of the Netherlands (*Brit. Birds* 75: 271, 573) and the ringing recovery of a wintering Portuguese bird nest-building in Sweden (*Brit. Birds* 73: 578), there is clearly ample opportunity for this species to continue to turn up here.

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* (1, 15, 1)

Lincolnshire Anderby Creek, adult ♂, showing characters of one of the races *isabellinus-phoenicuroides-speculigerus*, 7th to 8th November (M. J. Warren *et al.*) (fig. 8); presumed same, Gibraltar Point, 15th (D. R. Bromwich, R. Lambert, R. Overton *et al.*).

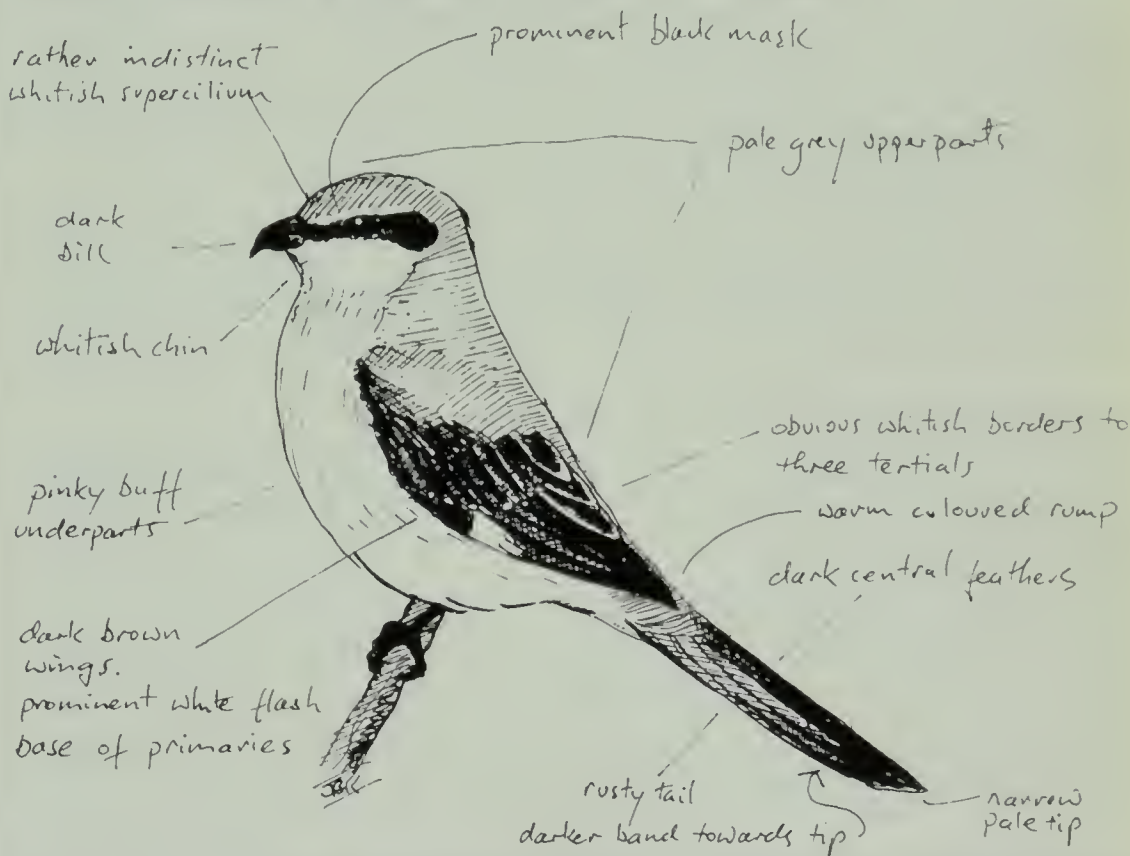


Fig. 8. Adult male Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*, Lincolnshire, November 1982 (J. B. Kemp)

1981 Shetland Fair Isle, adult ♂, 9th to 12th October (*Brit. Birds* 75: 525); characters considered to exclude the race *L. i. isabellinus* and was therefore either *speculigerus* or a pale *phoenicuroides* (*per* A. R. Dean).

(South Asia to China) The Lincolnshire one was a particularly stunning individual, judging from the enthusiastic accounts of those fortunate enough to catch up with it.

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor* (32, 83, 6)

Avon Royal Portbury Dock, 15th May (G. J. Upton, G. Youdale *et al.*).



222. Adult Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor*, East Sussex, July 1982 (*Andrew Moon*)

Humberside Flamborough Head, 18th May (J. C. Lamplough).

Norfolk Ringstead, 24th May (N. Bostock, J. B. Kemp *et al.*).

Powys Near Fan Pool, Montgomeryshire, 16th May (I. A. R. Brown, J. C. Smallwood).

Sussex, East Beachy Head, 23rd to 25th July (R. & Mrs B. Eagles, M. Kenefick, N. A. G. Lord *et al.*) (plate 222).

1981 Humberside Spurn, adult, 30th August to about 8th September (*Brit. Birds* 75: 525), locality was Easington.

(South and east Europe and southwest Asia) A good showing, but it does seem feasible that some of the above records could relate to the same wandering individual.

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator* (101, 326, 11)

Cornwall Porthgwarra, juvenile, 30th August to at least 6th September (B. K. Mellow *et al.*).

Devon Lundy, 12th May (K. A. Mortimer, A. Trout); another, 16th (P. de Groot, K. A. Mortimer). Dawlish Warren, 3rd July (R. Adams).

Dorset Ballard Down, 1st June (A. D. Jeffers).

Dyfed Skomer, 30th May (D. G. Hands).

Kent Dungeness, 7th to 8th June (S. W. Cale, P. J. Makepeace *et al.*).

Scilly St Mary's, 3rd to 4th June (R. D. Penhallurick, C. & D. Wege *et al.*). Tresco, juvenile, 6th to 14th October (E. & Mrs V. Lloyd *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, juvenile, 20th September (J. M. Dickson *et al.*).

Sussex, East St Leonard's, ♀, 20th June to at least 30th August, trapped 21st June (S. J. Rumsey, Miss C. A. Taylor *et al.*).

1979 Scilly St Mary's, 15th May to 10th June (*Brit. Birds* 73: 525), first seen 13th (M. Goodey).

1981 Dorset Radipole, 26th May (H. Platt, G. & Mrs N. D. Wareham *et al.*).

1981 Oxfordshire Wheatley, probable ♀ (*Brit. Birds* 75: 526), seen on 1st June only, not to 31st July as stated.

(West, central and south Europe, southwest Asia and north Africa) A slightly below-average showing and well down on 1981's second-highest-ever total of 22.

Rose-coloured Starling *Sturnus roseus* (160, 112, 9)

Cornwall Davidstow Airfield, juvenile, 6th October (I. Kendall, J. C. Pett).

Dorset Portland, juvenile, 22nd to 23rd October (M. & Mrs W. Rogers, G. Wallbridge, D. Walker *et al.*); presumed same, Verne, 30th (D. R. Kjaer).

Gloucestershire Hardwicke, juvenile, 4th November (K. O. Pierce).

Norfolk Hunstanton, adult, 22nd May (V. Eve). Little Walsingham, adult, about 17th to 24th June (Mr Jakes, J. B. Kemp, P. Pratley).

Orkney Wyre, adult, 31st August to at least 7th September (D. Coutts, E. R. Meek).

Scilly Bryher, juveniles, 12th to 27th September and 23rd October, two, 17th to 25th September (R. G. W. Heselden, D. B. Hunt, C. W. Murphy *et al.*); presumed one of same, St Martin's, 27th September to at least 30th October (A. W. P. Hearn, P. J. Marsh *et al.*).

(Southeast Europe and southwest Asia) There was one in Ireland: an adult in Oughterard, Co. Galway, from 16th to 23rd July. A good crop of summer adults and autumn juveniles. Following an interesting note by Alan Knox (*Brit. Birds* 72: 79-80) about a partially leucistic adult Starling *S. vulgaris* resembling a Rose-coloured Starling, an almost identical bird was seen in the Netherlands in August 1981 (*Dutch Birding* 4: 135-136), suggesting that this really is a relevant pitfall to bear in mind. A useful note on the moults and winter plumages of Rose-coloured Starlings can also be found in the same magazine (*Dutch Birding* 4: 136-139).

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus* (1, 15, 3)

Cornwall Sennen, moribund, 27th September, now at Bolton Museum (B. King, J. H. Summerlee).

Scilly St Mary's, first-year, 21st to 29th September (M. A. Hollingworth, P. D. White *et al.*).

(North America) Also, one trapped on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, on 9th October (plate 218), the sixth Irish record. Since 1958, this has proved to be the most frequent American passerine here, with 18 records, pushing Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata* into second place with 17 and American Robin *Turdus migratorius* and Grey-checked Thrush *Caltharus minimus* joint third with 15 each. There have now been eight in Scilly, but, surprisingly, the Cornish bird was a first county record.

Serin *Serinus serinus* (76, 353, 44)

Cornwall Porthgwarra, 23rd October (G. R. Ekins, T. I. Mills). St Levan, two, 25th October; presumed same, Porthcurno, 26th (S. J. Cox, I. R. Machin *et al.*), both possibly involving Porthgwarra individual.

Devon Locality C (*Brit. Birds* 75: 527), 22nd March to 22nd August: ♂ from 22nd March, two ♂♂ and ♀, 28th to 10th April, pair reared seven young from two broods (4 & 3). ♂ and juveniles remaining to 22nd August whilst unmated ♂ attended second site 6th to 27th June but returned, 8th to 21st August (C. W. Stone). Prawle Point, ♀, 11th April; ♂, 20th June (J. C. Nicholls).

Dorset East Fleet, 18th April (I. C. Gardner). Hengistbury Head, ♂, 3rd May (D. N. Smith). Portland, 1st May (S. J. Broyd, D. Walker); 3rd November (G. Walbridge); two, 9th December (D. Walker).

Hertfordshire Locality withheld, in song, 26th May (observers' names withheld).

Humberside Spurn, first-year ♂, trapped, 7th November (D. A. Boyd, J. Cudworth *et al.*).

Kent Margate, pair, 28th February to 7th March. ♀ to 23rd; ♂, 23rd October; two individuals, 8th November; ♀, 21st to 23rd (D. C. Gilbert *et al.*). St Margaret's, two, 6th May; one, 8th November (A. J. Greenland). Sandwich Bay, 10th May (D. M. Batchelor). Dungeness, 26th May (S. McMinn). Whiteness, 11th November (K. Lord, F. Solly), possibly one of Margate individuals.

Lincolnshire Gibraltar Point, 13th November (J. P. Shaughnessy).

Norfolk Holkham, ♂, 24th April (S. C. Joyner, N. Williams).

Scilly St Mary's, ♀ or immature, 27th October (J. M. Bayldon, B. & P. Gregory); ♂, 31st October (W. H. Wagstaffe).

Sussex, East Brighton Marina, 13th May (N. A. G. Lord). Near Brighton, 26th September (C. E. Bealey).

Sussex, West Slinfold, pair, 14th April (S. W. M. & Mrs. M. A. Hughes).

Wight St Catherine's Point, ♂, 19th April (P. J. Barden).

1980 Norfolk Muckleborough Hill, ♂, 24th to 25th May (*Brit. Birds* 75: 527), locality was Muckle Hill, Cromer, not as stated.

1981 Devon Locality C, pair reared broods of two and three, not three each as stated (C. W. Stone). East Prawle, ♂, 18th October (J. C. Nicholls, K. J. Robins, N. L. Trigg).

1981 Hereford & Worcester Wilden, near Stourport, ♂, 21st January and 1st April (B. Westwood).

1981 Kent Pegwell, 14th December (D. Beadle).

1981 Scilly Tresco, at least 4th May (*Brit. Birds* 75: 527), again 7th and was ♂ (M. A. Hallett).

1981 Wight St Catherine's Point, 13th May (A. Wilkinson, D. B. Wooldridge).

(West, central and southern Europe) None in Ireland, but an old record of one on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, on 4th October 1959, has been withdrawn by the observer. A summary of the Serin's current status on the Channel Islands is as follows (*per* Trevor Copp): 'Alderney: very rarely seen and probably not resident; Guernsey: first confirmed breeding in 1983—may also have bred in 1977, but very few sightings before this; Jersey: conservatively 30+ pairs breeding; Sark: only three ringed in the last five years, but a female in May 1981 had a well-developed brood patch'.

This is the last year that the Serin will be considered by this Committee, but it is pleasing that it should go out on a high note: a record number of sightings and continued breeding in Devon.

Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni* (30, 61, 1)

Fife Isle of May, trapped, 12th July (M. W. Fraser, H. Galbraith *et al.*).

1977 Scilly Bryher, 21st October to 5th November (*Brit. Birds* 71: 524), present since 19th, identification confirmed 21st.

(Circumpolar Arctic) Three others remain under consideration, including the well-watched 1981/82 Lincolnshire bird. The July Isle of May record is not without precedent as one was present on Foula, Shetland, from 13th to 25th July 1965 (*Brit. Birds* 59: 297). In fact, individuals at this time of year may present somewhat less of an identification headache as, after a year of wear and abrasion, they will be at their whitest, immediately prior to their post-nuptial moult.

Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus* (10, 64, 78)

Derbyshire/South Yorkshire Howden Reservoir, 30th October to at least 31st December, up to 25: four ♂♂, three ♀♀, 30th October; nine ♂♂, seven ♀♀, four immatures by 11th November; ten ♂♂, eleven ♀♀, four immatures by 15th, at least 24 remaining to end of year (D. Hursthouse *et al.*).

Humberside Spurn, juvenile/first-year, trapped, 11th October, found dead 12th, skin retained by J. R. Mather (J. Cudworth, S. L. James *et al.*). Humberston Fitties, ♂, 11th to 14th October; another, 12th to 23rd, trapped but not ringed, 12th (G. P. Catley, H. Bunn *et al.*). (*Brit. Birds* 76: plates 12, 13 & 220).

Lincolnshire Grainthorpe, ♂, 12th to 13th October, dead beneath window, 13th, skin retained by S. Lorand (W. Humberstone, S. Lorand).

Norfolk Holkham Meals, first-year ♂, 16th to 17th October (D. C. S. Davies, C. J. Mackenzie-Grieve, M. P. Sutherland).

Orkney Lyrawa Plantation, Hoy, ♀, dead, 29th October (E. R. Meek).

Shetland Fair Isle, six, 8th October (C. Robson); ♀, at least 12th to 29th, trapped 13th (N. J. Riddiford, A. Whitelaw *et al.*). Catfirth, ♂, trapped, 12th October (J. D. Okill *et al.*). Voe, six: three ♂♂, one trapped, and juvenile ♀, trapped, 16th October (J. D. Okill, I. Sandison, R. Wynde *et al.*); two additional ♀♀, 18th (C. Robson). Voe, ♀, 18th October. Strand, ♀, 18th October (C. Robson).

Yorkshire, South Holling Dale Plantation, 30th October to 6th December, twelve: two ♂♂, 30th October, seven ♂♂, three ♀♀ by 11th November; additional ♂ and ♀, 1st December; six ♂♂, two ♀♀ remaining to 6th (D. Hursthouse *et al.*). Wyming Brook, Rivelin Valley, 31st October to 22nd December, fourteen: about seven ♂♂ and seven ♀♀ (P. A. Ardron). See also Derbyshire/South Yorkshire.

Western Isles Langass, North Uist, ♀ and four juveniles, 21st to 22nd October (R. H. Dennis).

1962 Humberside Spurn, ♂ and ♀, both first-year, trapped 11th October, ♂ found dead, 12th, now at Bolton Museum (per E. Gorton, J. R. Mather).

1962 Shetland Quendale, ♂, trapped, 7th October (C. J. Booth).

(Northern Europe, from Norway east to Russia and south to Estonia) There was a big invasion in 1962, when 62 were reported, 59 of which were on Fair Isle (*Brit. Birds* 73: 527), but the only subsequent records were two in Humberside in 1975 (*Brit. Birds* 71: 525; 73: 527). This year's records of this easily overlooked and tricky species are being analysed by Graham Catley (see *Brit. Birds* 76: 237).

Trumpeter Finch *Bucaneles githagineus* (0, 3, 1)

1981 Orkney Sanday, ♂, 26th to 28th May (A. & Mrs. F. Cormack, J. E. Crossley, Dr K. F. Woodbridge *et al.*).

(Southeast Spain, Canary Islands, northern Africa and southwest Asia) This third British record is almost exactly ten years after the first two, one of which, on Hauda Island, Sutherland, was also in the far north (*Brit. Birds* 70: 45-49). Late spring and early summer is obviously proving to be the best time for this delightful desert finch, though the only record for the Channel Islands was in autumn: 29th October to 1st November 1973 (*Brit. Birds* 74: 343).

Scarlet Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* (200+, 617, 41)

All records relate to ♀♀ or immatures unless otherwise stated.

Berkshire Earley, in song, 29th May (T. A. Guyatt).

Dyfed Skomer, 19th September (M. de L. Brooke).

Grampian Newburgh, 5th October (C. R. McKay *et al.*).

Gwynedd Bardsey, 30th May (K. A. Chapman, T. R. Cleaves, D. Suddaby).

Humberside Spurn, first-summer ♂, 24th May (D. Page, P. Swallow, J. M. Turton *et al.*); 9th September (P. Antrobus, S. J. Hogan *et al.*).

Lothian Barn's Ness, 2nd to 3rd October (A. Brown, P. R. Gordon).

Northumberland Low Hauxley, 5th September (S. W. Anderson).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, all trapped: 26th May; 11th September; two, 24th September (Dr K. F. Woodbridge). Holm, 6th to 7th September (E. R. Meek, E. J. Williams). South Ronaldsay, 2nd October (J. & Mrs R. McCutcheon).

Shetland Fair Isle, in spring, four: 27th to 28th May (J. M. Dickson, M. Mynott, M. Thomas); two, 30th May to 1st June, one trapped, 30th (D. G. Borton, J. M. Dickson, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*); 18th June (N. J. Riddiford *et al.*); in autumn, at least eleven: 26th July (J. F. Holloway); 14th to 15th August, trapped, 14th; 22nd August; possibly same, 25th August to 2nd September, trapped, 26th; two, 27th, 31st and 2nd September (D. G. Borton, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*); 5th to 11th September, two 5th to 8th, three, 6th to 7th, one trapped 6th; trapped, 23rd; another two, 24th to 25th; another, 25th; one of same to 27th (N. J. Riddiford *et al.*); another, 28th, remains under consideration. Whalsay, 16th to 23rd May (Dr B. Marshall). Sumburgh, 23rd May. Virkie, 23rd May. Out Skerries, 2nd June; 13th to 15th September (per D. Coutts). Norwick, Unst, ♂, 10th June. Levenwick, 22nd to 23rd August. Bressay, 3rd September. Fetlar, 6th to 13th September (per D. Coutts).

Suffolk Lakenheath area, first-summer ♂, 11th June (A. H. J. Harrop, Miss J. Kerrigan).

1981 Essex Fingringhoe Wick, 10th September (D. R. Waugh).

1981 Scilly St Mary's, 5th to 12th October (H. P. K. Robinson *et al.*).

1981 Shetland Haroldswick, ♂, 12th to 16th May (I. Spense *et al.*). Out Skerries, four: 4th June; 7th June; 8th August; 22nd to 23rd August (E. Tait). Fetlar, five: 21st August; 21st to 23rd August; 30th August; 2nd to 3rd September; 15th September (J. N. Dymond). Whalsay, four: 2nd September; 7th September; 11th to 13th September; 15th September (Dr B. Marshall). North Kergord, 15th September (I. Spense). Sumburgh, ♂ and ♀, 29th May (*Brit. Birds* 75: 529), delete P. Callaway.

(East Europe and across Asia and east Turkey to Himalayas) Two in Ireland, on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, on 19th October, and at Old Head of Kinsale, Co. Cork, on 30th and 31st October, the first for the Irish mainland. The belated records for 1981 bring that year's total to 59. This is the last year that Scarlet Rosefinch will be dealt with by this Committee, but hopefully we will soon see it appearing in the annual report on rare breeding birds.

Black-and-white Warbler *Mniotilta varia* (1, 5, 1)

Cornwall Mylor Bridge, near Penryn, dead, 1st September, now at County Museum, Truro (Dr G. W. Davies, Mrs M. Dunstan, Mrs C. Libby).

(North America) Three of the previous six have been in September, but this is the earliest by nine days. Rather a pathetic episode, flying the Atlantic only to hit a window in Falmouth: obviously one of life's born losers.

Tennessee Warbler *Vermivora peregrina* (0, 2, 1)

Orkney Holm, first-year, 5th to 7th September, trapped 7th (E. R. Meek *et al.*).

(North America) This record ties in remarkably well with the previous two, both on Fair Isle, in September 1975 (*Brit. Birds* 74: 90-94). This is just about the nearest thing the Americans have to a *Phylloscopus*: even its song is vaguely reminiscent of the trill of a Wood Warbler *P. sibilatrix*.

Yellow-rumped Warbler *Dendroica coronata* (1, 6, 2)

Western Isles Newton, North Uist, 22nd to 23rd October (R. H. & Mrs M. Dennis, C. H. Pickup).



223. Yellow-rumped Warbler *Dendroica coronata*, Co. Cork, October 1982 (Kieran Grace)

(North America) Ireland had its second in 1982: an immature trapped on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, on 19th and 20th October (plates 219 & 223). British observers, no doubt like their American counterparts, continue to lament the appalling change of name from the delightful 'Myrtle Warbler'.

Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata* (0, 15, 2)

Scilly St Mary's, 17th to 23rd October (M. A. Hallett, P. V. Harvey, P. J. Tullett *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 76: plate 8).

1976 Scilly St Mary's, two, 4th to 13th October, one to 23rd (*Brit. Birds* 70: 440), second individual not located until 6th.

(North America) Also, one trapped on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, from 24th to 30th October, the second Irish record. The most frequent American wood-warbler on this side of the Atlantic, but these are the first since 1977 (although one was seen in the Channel Islands in 1980: *Brit. Birds* 74: 343).

American Redstart *Setophaga ruticilla* (0, 2, 2)

Lincolnshire Gibraltar Point, first-winter, probably ♂, 7th November to 5th December, trapped 8th November (R. Lambert, R. Watson, K. Winfield *et al.*) (plate 224).



224. First-winter American Redstart *Setophaga ruticilla*. Lincolnshire, November/December 1982 (David M. Cottridge)

Strathclyde Portnahaven, Islay, ♀ or immature, 1st November (Mrs P. J. S. Dawson, D. Macleod).

(North America) One of the most attractive American wood-warblers, the two previous records were both in remote western localities, at Porthgwarra, Cornwall, in October 1967 and on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, a year later (*Brit. Birds* 62: 486; 63: 151-153). The Islay bird followed suit, and it seemed destined to remain one of the most sought-after passerines on the British list. The events at Gibraltar Point, however, changed all that, and many hundreds were able to drool over this hyperactive, eye-catching bird as it darted and flitted around its favourite patch of pines and willows. East coast records of American passerines are always suspected of being ship-assisted, but it seems far more likely that this particular individual had moved to Lincolnshire after making an earlier landfall somewhere to the north or west.

Northern Waterthrush *Seiurus noveboracensis* (0, 2, 1)**Scilly** Bryher, 29th September to 4th October (N. C. Jackson, M. H. Woodcock *et al.*).

(North America) The third for Britain and the third for Scilly.

Scarlet Tanager *Piranga olivacea* (0, 3, 1)**Scilly** St Mary's, ♀, 12th to 18th October (A. G. Goodwin *et al.*).(North America) The third for Scilly, but the first female. On one occasion during its stay, it was feeding in the same bush as a Pallas's Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus*: surely a world first!**Rustic Bunting** *Emberiza rustica* (34, 114, 10)**Humberside** Spurn, 20th to 22nd October (S. H. Holliday, S. T. Robinson, S. J. Roddis *et al.*).**Scilly** Tresco, immature, 22nd to 26th October (C. W. Murphy, J. A. Wolstencroft *et al.*). St Martin's, ♂, 27th October (G. E. Dobbs *et al.*).**Shetland** Whalsay, ♂, 15th May (Dr B. Marshall, I. S. Robertson). Esha Ness, 25th May (S. L. Haycox). Out Skerries, 28th May (P. Fisher *et al.*). Fair Isle, ♀, 18th May (D. G. Borton); ♂, 23rd May (J. M. Dickson, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*); 2nd to 11th October (J. F. Holloway, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*). Sumburgh, ♂, 30th September (J. N. Dymond, A. V. Moon *et al.*).**1981 Shetland** Esha Ness, ♂, 10th May (R. Gall).

(Northeast Europe across to north Asia) A good showing, but all fairly typical.

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla* (94, 189, 11)**Fife** Fife Ness, 14th October (P. Branscomb, R. W. Byrne, W. Mattingly).**Norfolk** Sheringham, trapped, 11th October (Dr M. P. Taylor).**Northumberland** Low Hauxley, 12th to 13th May (M. Nattrass *et al.*).**Shetland** Fair Isle, 26th to 28th September (J. K. Archer, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*); first-year, 6th to 9th October, trapped 6th (J. F. Holloway, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*); not aged, 11th-12th October (J. M. Dickson, J. F. Holloway *et al.*). Out Skerries, 8th October (D. M. Pullan *et al.*); 16th to 20th October (D. M. Pullan *et al.*). Spiggie, 21st October (J. N. Dymond). Whalsay, first-year, trapped, 22nd October (Dr B. Marshall, I. S. Robertson); not aged, 23rd October (Dr B. Marshall).**1980 Shetland** Fair Isle, 22nd September to 1st October (M. Nattrass, I. S. Robertson *et al.*).**1981 Cornwall** Porthgarra, 14th April (W. Urwin).**1981 Norfolk** Holkham Meals, 18th October (J. P. Guest, R. M. O'Connor, S. P. Singleton *et al.*).

(Northeast Europe and north Asia) A good October influx into Shetland, correlating well with the arrivals of other eastern vagrants.

Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola* (10, 88, 4)**Devon** Lundy, first-winter, 18th to 25th September, trapped 18th and 21st (C. Dee, J. M. B. King *et al.*).**Highland** Locality withheld, in song, 14th June (P. Mason).**Shetland** Fair Isle, probably first-winter, 17th to 22nd September (J. M. Dickson, P. M. Ellis, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*). Out Skerries, ♀ or immature, 21st September to 4th October, trapped 29th September (P. M. Ellis, J. D. Okill, D. M. Pullan *et al.*) (plate 221).(Northeast Europe across north Asia) There are two previous British east coast spring records: at Spurn, Humberside, in June 1975 and at Gibraltar Point, Lincolnshire, in May 1977 (*Brit. Birds* 69: 357; 71: 528).

but an inland singing male is without precedent. Although still very much a Fair Isle speciality, there have been three previous records in the southwest; even so, the Lundy individual must have been a very welcome addition to the island's list.

Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala* (9, 49, 1)

Shetland Fair Isle, ♀, trapped, 12th September (D. G. Borton, N. J. Riddilord *et al.*).

(Southeast and southwest Asia) Only the second record in the last three years. Small numbers were annual throughout the 1970s, with an average of three a year.

Bobolink *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* (0, 8, 1)

(North America) One in Ireland, trapped on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, from 13th to 24th September, the second Irish record.

It is interesting to compare 1982 with other good years for American landbirds. The top five previous years have been as follows (numbers in brackets represent the numbers of individuals and the number of species): 1966 (11:9), 1967 (15:10), 1968 (16:11), 1975 (15:12) and 1976 (25:9). This report details 21 individuals of 13 species, but, assuming the late acceptance of two additional Black-billed Cuckoos *Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*, two Chimney Swifts *Chaetura pelagica*, a Northern Mockingbird *Mimus polyglottos*, a Varied Thrush *Ixoreus naevius*, a Parula Warbler *Parula americana*, an unidentified American wood-warbler and a Savannah Sparrow *Ammodramus sandwichensis*, all of which are still under consideration, the total of 30 American landbirds of 19 species would make 1982 easily the best year ever, for both quantity and variety.

Northern Oriole *Icterus galbula* (0, 13, 0)

1968 Cornwall Bodmin Moor, adult ♂, 11th to 13th May (*Brit. Birds* 62: 487), age now considered first-winter.

1968 Warwickshire Coventry, first-winter ♂, dead, 16th December, now at Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry (A. C. Stringer per K. C. Davies and C. H. Potter).

(North America) Although regarded at the time as probably relating to an escape, the 1968 Coventry record has been reviewed in the light of modern attitudes to such records. With 13 between 1958 and 1974, this species seemed destined to become fairly frequent here (there were as many as four in 1967 and three in 1968). It seems inexplicable, therefore, that none has occurred since one on Fair Isle in 1974 (*Brit. Birds* 68: 330).

Appendix 1. Category D species accepted (see *Brit. Birds* 64: 429)

White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus* (not known, 10, 0)

1971 Norfolk Breydon, 31st August (*Brit. Birds* 75: 531); all three now accepted.

1975 Dorset Portland, 5th September (M. G. W. Terry *et al.*).

(Southeast Europe, west and southwest Asia and Africa) Contenders for the most plastic pelican award will find it hard to beat the one at Chew Valley Lake in September 1973, which actually landed on the roof of a parked car!

Barrow's Goldeneye *Bucephala islandica* (0, 1, 0):

1979 Strathclyde Irvine, ♂, 4th November to 28th December (Dr J. T. Knowler *et al.*).

(Iceland, southwest Greenland, northwest Canada and western North America) As already reported (*Brit. Birds* 76: 367), other records of an immature male at Wallasey, Merseyside, from May to September 1977, a male at Abberton Reservoir, Essex, in April and May 1979, and a male at Bewl Bridge Reservoir, East Sussex/Kent, from January to March 1979 and from December 1979 to April 1980, were considered by the BOU Records Committee as being escapes. People who made the long trip to Irvine will be disappointed that it did not get onto Category A, but no doubt it will remain indelibly inked-in on more than a few life lists.

Appendix 2. Lists of records not accepted 1982

White-billed Diver Portland, Dorset, 30th September. **Cory's Shearwater** Minsmere, Suffolk, 5th September; Blakeney Point, Norfolk, 6th September; Prawle Point, Devon, 21st September; St Mary's, Scilly, 4th October; Tresco, Scilly, 5th October; 7th October; St Mary's, Scilly, 11th October; 13th October; Beachy Head, East Sussex, two, 16th October. **Purple Heron** Stodmarsh, Kent, 19th May; Shaldon, Devon, 1st June; Brighton, East Sussex, 9th June; Cley, Norfolk, 12th November. **White Stork** Kirdford, West Sussex, 25th April; near Cobham, Surrey, 31st December. **Wood Duck** Penzance, Cornwall, 15th October. **Blue-winged Teal** Upton Warren, Hereford & Worcester, 21st November. **Ring-necked Duck** Chew Valley Lake, Avon, 17th August; Peterborough, Cambridgeshire, 12th September; Rye, East Sussex, 28th November. **Black Scoter** Tonfanau, Gwynedd, 24th to 27th December. **Surf Scoter** Minsmere, Suffolk, 10th October. **Barrow's Goldeneye** Lower Rainham, Kent, 5th January. **Black Kite** Milborne Port, Somerset, 3rd May; Brimpton, Berkshire, 8th July. **Short-toed Eagle** Coverack, Cornwall, 11th September. **Booted Eagle** Minsmere, Suffolk, 3rd August. **Lesser Kestrel** Start Point, Devon, 8th April. **Red-footed Falcon** Cley, Norfolk, 13th May; New Forest, Hampshire, 27th May; Crawley, West Sussex, 3rd June; Lewdown, Devon, 21st September. **Gyr Falcon** Wadebridge, Cornwall, 13th October. **Crane** Rye, East Sussex, three, 31st October; Gloucester, 9th December. **Black-winged Stilt** Dorking, Surrey, ten, 13th July. **Pratincole** Probus, Cornwall, 31st October. **Killdeer** Rye, East Sussex, 2nd October. **Lesser Golden Plover** Gilston Park, Hertfordshire, 19th April. **White-rumped Sandpiper** Bude, Cornwall, 7th to 8th April; Frodsham, Cheshire, 21st September. **Baird's Sandpiper** Whitesands Bay, Dyfed, 11th September. **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** Skegness, Lincolnshire, 6th September. **Broad-billed Sandpiper** Cley, Norfolk, 28th October. **Great Snipe** Newport-on-Tay, Fife, 8th and 16th January; Peterborough, Cambridgeshire, two, 3rd to 4th September; Isle of May, Fife, 8th November. **Long-billed Dowitcher** Northam Burrows, Devon, two, 1st August; Rye, East Sussex, 28th November. **Dowitcher** Seal Sands, Cleveland, 23rd January; Gladhouse Reservoir, Lothian, 12th September; Barnstaple, Devon, 26th October. **Slender-billed Curlew** Porthilly, Cornwall, 18th October. **Marsh Sandpiper** Chew Valley Lake, Avon, second individual, 3rd October. **Spotted Sandpiper** Port Mhor Bragar, Lewis, Western Isles, 11th to 14th September. **Franklin's Gull** Ynyslas, Dyfed, 29th December. **Bonaparte's Gull** Southport, Merseyside, 2nd to 5th January; Helliwell Point, Essex, 16th September; Chew Valley Lake, Avon, 18th September. **Slender-billed Gull** Rhyl, Clwyd, 26th September. **Ross's Gull** Croyde Bay, Devon, 25th August. **Gull-billed Tern** Winterton, Norfolk, 9th August; Portland, Dorset, 4th September; Pett Pools, East Sussex, two, 27th September; Budleigh Salterton, Devon, 29th September. **Forster's Tern** Lowestoft, Suffolk, 20th September. **Whiskered Tern** Beachy Head, East Sussex, 10th May; Swarkestone, Derbyshire, 12th May; Sandwich Bay, Kent, 15th May; Benacre, Suffolk, 19th September; Withernsea, Humberside, 26th September. **White-winged Black Tern** Weir Wood Reservoir, East Sussex, 15th September; Chichester Harbour, West Sussex, two, 17th October. **Brünnich's Guillemot** Seapa Beach, Orkney, 3rd October. **Snowy Owl** Near Eastbourne, East Sussex, 11th October. **Plain Swift** Stevenage, Hertfordshire, 7th November. **Pallid Swift** Redruth, Cornwall, 8th November. **Bee-eater** Rustington, West Sussex, 4th July; Dungeness, Kent, 28th August. **Roller** Blacktoft Sands, Humberside, 26th September. **Yellow-shafted Flicker** Minsmere, Suffolk, 30th August. **Black Woodpecker** Frensham Common, Surrey, 15th July. **Crested Lark** Horsey Island, Essex, 28th April; Coverack, Cornwall, 2nd to 3rd June. **Richard's Pipit** Bude, Cornwall, 22nd August; Woolack Point, Dyfed, 30th October; Burnham-on-Sea, Somerset, 26th November. **Tawny Pipit** Saltfleetby, Lincolnshire, 9th June; Dawlish Warren, Devon, 7th October; St Mary's, Scilly, two, 13th October. **Red-throated Pipit** Isle of May, Fife, 2nd June. **Citrine Wagtail** Stithians Reservoir, Cornwall, 3rd September. **Rufous Bush Robin** Isle of May, Fife, 10th October. **Thrush Nightingale** Fife Ness, Fife, 13th to 14th October. **Siberian Stonechat** Fair Isle, Shetland, 6th October; Rame Head, Cornwall, 30th October. **Isabelline Wheatear** Salterns Lake, Dorset, 9th September; Llantwit Major, South Glamorgan, 10th October. **Rock Thrush** St Mary's, Scilly, 20th May. **Siberian Thrush** Wixoe, Suffolk, 15th January. **Dusky Thrush** Liss Forest, Hampshire, three, 14th January. **Aquatic Warbler** Walberswick, Suffolk, 18th August; Stithians Reservoir, Cornwall, 25th August; Steart, Somerset, 26th August; Saltfleetby, Lincolnshire, 30th August; Countess Wear, Devon, 9th September; Ebbord area, Devon, two records, 15th September; Pagham Harbour, West Sussex, 10th October. **Greenish Warbler** Orpington, Kent, 9th November. **Pallas's Warbler** Blyth, Northumberland, 10th October; Fife Ness, Fife, 12th October; Peterhead, Grampian, 15th October; Egilsay, Orkney, 8th November. **Azure Tit** Wokingham, Berkshire, 9th December. **Lesser Grey Shrike** Rhosili Down, West Glamorgan, 11th April. **Masked Shrike** Holkham Meads, Norfolk, 11th October. **Nutcracker** Bath, Avon, two, 9th January; Grahnam Water, Cambridgeshire, 31st January. **Rock Sparrow** Davidstow, Cornwall, 8th March. **Serin** Bude, Cornwall, 8th January; North Foreland, Kent, 4th April; Portgwarra, Cornwall, 12th April; Badgers Mount, Kent, 13th June; Whiteness, Kent, 28th November. **Citrel Finch** Liskeard, Cornwall, 30th July. **Arctic Redpoll** Stromness, Orkney, 26th September; Low Hauxley, Northumberland, 19th October. **Scarlet Rosefinch** Spurn, Humberside, 5th June; Hunstanton, Norfolk, 12th September. **Rustic Bunting** Chichester Gravel-pits, West Sussex, 18th May. **Little Bunting** Quenington, Gloucestershire, 9th to 17th January; Aveton Gifford, Devon, 14th February; Halesworth, Suffolk, 5th to 9th October; Locke Park, Cleveland, 10th October; Walls, Shetland, two, 9th November. **Yellow-breasted Bunting** Martinshaven, Dyfed, 25th July.

1981

Bulwer's Petrel Mundesley, Norfolk, 20th September. **Cory's Shearwater** Dunure, Strathclyde, 9th June; Dipple, Strathclyde, two, 5th August; Whitburn, Tyne & Wear, 20th August. **Madeiran Petrel** Blunham, Bedfordshire, 26th April. **American Bittern** Endrick Mouth, Strathclyde, 27th December. **Purple Heron** Wheldrake Ings, North Yorkshire, 4th January and 21st February; Haldon, Devon, 9th May. **Green-winged Teal** Libberton, Strathclyde, 31st October to 7th November. **Falcated Duck** Biggar, Strathclyde, 31st October. **Black Scoter** Lizard, Cornwall, 12th April. **Surf Scoter** Filey Brigg, North Yorkshire, 20th January. **Black Kite** Southfield Reservoir, South Yorkshire, 3rd May. **Short-toed Eagle** Prawle Point, Devon, 6th October. **White-rumped Sandpiper** Low Hauxley, Northumberland, 12th September. **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** Achnahaird, Highland, 23rd August. **Great Snipe** Cors Fochmo, Dyfed, 27th October to 10th November. **Dowitcher** South Walney, Cumbria, 11th October. **Marsh Sandpiper** Lepe, Hampshire, 22nd March. **Terek Sandpiper** Battlehill, Dumfries & Galloway, 3rd January. **Wilson's Phalarope** Loch of Kinnordy, Tayside, two, 13th September. **Laughing Gull** Durlston, Dorset, 17th December; Snettisham, Norfolk, 18th December. **Bonaparte's Gull** Stenness, Orkney, 27th May. **Sooty Tern** Marske, Cleveland, 12th September. **White-winged Black Tern** Cheddar Reservoir, Somerset, 23rd to 24th August. **Alpine Swift** Sandwich Bay, Kent, 11th September. **Bee-eater** Ballarigh Cronk, Isle of Man, 8th June. **Red-rumped Swallow** Higham Marsh, Kent, 26th September. **Richard's Pipit** Crowdy Reservoir, Cornwall, 1st September; Widemouth Bay, Cornwall, 2nd September; Holme, Norfolk, additional individual, 31st October. **Tawny Pipit** Trevoze Head, Cornwall, 5th September. **Siberian Rubythroat** Talmine-by-Lairg, Highland, 5th to 6th July. **Savi's Warbler** Portland, Dorset, additional individual, 22nd to 23rd April; Skellow, North Yorkshire, 29th July. **Aquatic Warbler** Leighton Moss, Lancashire, 21st August; Willen Lake, Buckinghamshire, 20th September. **Moustached Warbler** Wells, Norfolk, 6th September. **Greenish Warbler** Portland, Dorset, 1st September. **Arctic Warbler** Weisdale, Shetland, 13th October; Uveasound, Unst, Shetland, 22nd to 25th October. **Pallas's Warbler** Sandwich Bay, Kent, 6th November. **Brown Flycatcher** Cottingham, Humberside, 3rd September. **Nutcracker** Shipley Bridge, Devon, four, 3rd October. **Serin** St Catherine's Point, Isle of Wight, 10th April; Prior's Fen Eye, Cambridgeshire, 13th September. **Arctic Redpoll** Hartlepool, Cleveland, 28th December. **Pallas's Reed Bunting** Overy Marsh, Norfolk, 18th October. **Little Bunting** Raglan, Gwent, 25th February; Caerlaverock, Dumfries & Galloway, 25th February; Fetlar, Shetland, 6th May, File Ness, File, 27th September.

1980

Black-browed Albatross Staple Sound, Northumberland, 17th May. **Black Stork** Southminster, Essex, 25th May. **Steller's Eider** Cley, Norfolk, 12th September. **Red-footed Falcon** Studland Heath, Dorset, 16th May; Landlev Reservoir, West Yorkshire, 9th October. **Baird's Sandpiper** Dale, Dyfed, 19th September. **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** Jarrow Slake, Tyne & Wear, 16th September. **Laughing Gull** Pitsea Marsh, Essex, 19th February. **Red-rumped Swallow** Witham Estuary, Lincolnshire, 13th September. **Richard's Pipit** Shotton, Clwyd, 22nd November.

1979

Cory's Shearwater St Agnes, Scilly, two, 7th October. **Red-footed Falcon** East Fleet, Dorset, 7th October. **Baird's Sandpiper** Marshside, Merseyside, 26th August; Porlock Marsh, Somerset, 9th September; Banks Marsh, Lancashire, 7th October. **Terek Sandpiper** Westing, Unst, Shetland, 14th August. **Slender-billed Gull** East Fleet, Dorset, 22nd July.

1978

Wilson's Petrel Off Scilly, 13th September. **Richard's Pipit** Towyn Burrows, Dyfed, 8th January.

1977

Baird's Sandpiper Steart, Somerset, 2nd to 3rd August. **Serin** St Mary's, Scilly, 16th October.

1976

Long-tailed Skua Whalsay, Shetland, 30th April. **Franklin's Gull** West Runton, Norfolk, 29th October. **Rose-coloured Starling** Saltcoates, Strathclyde, August.

1975

Alpine Swift Great Axton, North Yorkshire, 20th July.

1974

Whiskered Tern Redesmere, Cheshire, 8th to 10th September.

1973

Red-necked Stint Frodsham, Cheshire, 21st to 25th October.

1972

White-rumped Sandpiper Sandbach, Cheshire, 23rd to 24th October. **Baird's Sandpiper** Sandbach, Cheshire, 22nd to 23rd October. **Broad-billed Sandpiper** Sandbach, Cheshire, 5th August. **Parrot Crossbill** St Mary's, Scilly, two, 22nd October.

1971

Little Shearwater Meols, Merseyside (form. Cheshire), 20th October. **Rock Thrush** Danebridge, Cheshire, 10th May.

1970

Lesser Spotted Eagle Sandwich Bay, Kent, 5th January.

1969

Lesser Spotted Eagle Gibraltar Point, Lincolnshire, 17th to 20th September; Isle of May, File, 18th September; Beachy Head, East Sussex, 19th to 24th September.

1968

Lesser Spotted Eagle Sandwich Bay, Kent, 5th September.

1966

Parrot Crossbill Sandwich Bay, Kent, 13th September.

1960

Great Spotted Cuckoo Netherby, Cumbria, 26th June. **Pied Wheatear** Crag Lavan, Gwynedd, 8th April.

Mystery photographs



225. Adult Iceland Gull *Larus glaucooides*, Merseyside, January/February 1981 (Peter M. Harris)

83 The mottles on the neck and breast of this gull (plate 196, repeated here as plate 225) indicate that it is of the large, white-headed-in-summer group, not the smaller, dark-hooded group which tend to have clearer head markings, but retain an all-white foreneck and breast, when they lose their hood in winter. Thus, we rule out Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus* (the only small gull with such a pale underwing and white wingtips) immediately. In any case, the bill is pale with a dark gonys patch, so we have an adult of either Glaucous *L. hyperboreus* or Iceland Gull *L. glaucooides* in winter plumage. The grey below the flight feathers (also unlike Mediterranean) gives every reason to believe that it is one of those two, not an albino; the dark upper primary pattern of Thayer's Gull *L. thayeri* would show through against the light sky and the black tips of half-grown primaries of a moulting Herring Gull *L. argentatus* in autumn show well from below, even when scarcely at all from above. This is an Iceland Gull; but, as the accompanying photograph of an adult Glaucous (plate 226) shows, there is no worthwhile plumage (or bare-part colour) difference: we rely entirely on shape, jizz and, in the field, size. This makes life very difficult for any record-assessor. Distribution is no help. Is wing shape? Judge for yourself! I find that Iceland is broader and rounder in the wing (and



226. Adult Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus*, East Lothian, February 1979 (S. R. D. da Prato and E. S. da Prato)

Glaucous longer and more pointed) than is often claimed. But the Glaucous, with a large bill, long, protruding head and neck, very long broad wings and solid body gives an impression of size and strength. The Iceland can hardly be called more slender—its body, indeed, is quite podgy and pigeon-like—but its squat head and thick neck, rounder chest and, especially, shorter bill, give it a softer, well-padded, thick-feathered look appropriate to its northern origin. The short bill of the Iceland and longer head profile typical of Glaucous are crucial. Even first-years have no useful plumage differences. Bill pattern helps here: Glaucous (plate 227) has a large pale pink basal area blending into the pale face (unlike Herring) and a clearly defined dark tip; Iceland (plate 228) has the base usually darker and less pink, and with a smudgy backward extension of the dark tip on the lower mandible. This is of less help on older birds. Again, at rest, Glaucous looks the more massive, longer-legged and longer-billed; but they *can* have perfectly round heads. Icelanders have a steep forehead at all times; especially important, they have small bills and round faces, always the most critical point (S. C. Madge, *in litt.*, has compared Iceland's head-shape and structure with that of Common Gull *L. canus*); many, like this one, look paler on the head and upper breast than elsewhere, probably more so than Glaucous. The wingtip projection is longer (sometimes very obvious indeed), the legs shorter, the effect more dumpy and rounded at the front,



227. First-winter Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus*, Western Isles, March 1982 (Iain H. Leach)



228. First-winter Iceland Gull *Larus glaucooides*, Western Isles, March 1982 (Iain H. Leach)

less bulky and massive towards the rear. At this point it becomes very much easier to appreciate the difference in photographs than it is to put into words—relative head size, eye diameters, bill depth and so on are all very well—but which of these has the smaller head relative to the body? Which has the largest or more centrally placed eye? Such things are sometimes effectively useless; yet there is no doubting which is which: a case where good photographs teach more than pages of field guides? The two standing first-winter birds were photographed in March 1982: note the obvious feather wear by this date.

R. A. HUME



229 & 230. Mystery photograph 83. Identify the species. Answer next month

Notes

Division of parental care by Mute Swans In May 1978, at Marazion marsh, Cornwall, a pair of Mute Swans *Cygnus olor* reared three cygnets. In the first four weeks the family remained intact, keeping near the nest site in pools. During this period, I had not seen any division of parental care. When the parents often separated in pools well apart, however, I noticed the cob caring for one of the cygnets, while the pen tended the other two. There were also many occasions when the family re-united: the division of parental care was still maintained, and continued when the young were in juvenile plumage. In late September, I visited Mousehole and found what appeared to be the Marazion pen with her two well-grown young. The distance between these two sites is about 2½ km; as the pen appeared to be in wing-moult, and it was doubtful if the young were capable of flight, they must have crossed the sea at a time of comparatively moderate weather. I immediately visited Marazion, and found only the cob with his single young. It was two days before the pen and her young re-appeared at Marazion; all seemed once again to form a united family.

BWP states that 'Both sexes tend young. Family party remains intact until well after fledging . . .'; although Dr Janet Kear (*in litt.*) expressed the view that some cygnets stay with one parent and some with the other, this being probably quite normal (perhaps the young, not the parents, bring this about).

BERNARD KING

Gull Cry, 9 Park Road, Newlyn, Penzance, Cornwall

Canada Geese diving On 17th February 1980, at Fairhaven Lake, Lytham St Annes, Lancashire, Malcolm Hart and I noticed nine Canada Geese *Branta canadensis* in aggressive display. Suddenly three dived and swam under the water, remaining down for periods of between ten and 12 seconds; they ran along the surface almost like Great Crested Grebes



Podiceps cristatus before diving. One dive was timed at 23 seconds. My collective totals for these three geese over a period of one hour and 20 minutes were:

	TIME				
	10-12 secs	12-14 secs	16 secs	18-20 secs	20-23 secs
No. of dives	18	8	8	4	2

There were also many dives of less than ten seconds, but only the same three individuals were involved.

RON FREETHY

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Dr Malcolm Ogilvie has commented as follows: 'Geese have frequently been observed running along the surface and diving in the manner described by Mr Freethy, and Mute Swans *Cygnus olor* have also been seen behaving similarly (though without raising themselves up on their feet like grebes). This seems to be some form of "play", but the behaviour does not appear to have been properly recorded in the literature.' Eds

Female Goldeneye with wholly yellow bill On 30th November 1982, I watched a group of six female and two male Goldeneyes *Bucephala clangula* on the River Tyne at Hexham, Northumberland, for ten minutes in good light with 10×40 binoculars and 22×60 telescope at a range of about 75 m. One female had a wholly pale pinkish yellow bill (including the nail). In all other aspects of plumage, structure and size, she appeared identical to the five typical females in her company.

Clearly, such a bird, if alone, might be misidentified as a female Barrow's Goldeneye *B. islandica*.

ANDREW H. J. HARROP

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Foot-slapping by Coots The note on foot-slapping by Coots *Fulica atra* (*Brit. Birds* 75: 126-127) prompts the following. On 7th March 1982, at Chew Valley Lake, Avon, my car's arrival made a group of Coots feeding on the grass at the water's edge move quietly back to the water and start swimming away. As I got out and walked towards them, one already standing on a shallow raft of driftwood about 10m offshore commenced slapping the waterlogged vegetation with its right foot; it did this six or seven times, the sound being loud and clear to me at over 50m; it then dropped into the water and swam to join the others. Coots feeding on or near the shore normally rush off, even when approached distantly. On this occasion, the fact that the Coot was already away from the bank may have made it feel secure enough to sound a warning before joining the rush for safety.

K. J. HALL

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Call of tundra Ringed Plover On 7th and 8th September 1982, several Ringed Plovers *Charadrius hiaticula* of the tundra race *tundrae* were present on Fair Isle, Shetland, among larger numbers of the nominate race. They were all in first-winter plumage and stood out readily as being smaller in all respects and darker on the back. My attention was first drawn to them by the call, a 'chee-wit' quite unlike the more fluty calls of the nominate birds.

Indeed, the first one I heard tempted me to investigate the possibility of Semipalmated Plover *C. semipalmatus*. The bill, however, though smaller, was the same shape and colour pattern, and the legs the same colour as those of Ringed Plover, the white collar was relatively broad, it had a broad white supercilium, and the wing-coverts, though contrasting with the dark back, were not particularly pale. Eventually, after considerable close scrutiny, I was able to confirm that it lacked the necessary amount of toe webbing for Semipalmated Plover. I heard the call on several occasions. It appeared to be the typical flight call of this tundra race. Unfortunately, I am not familiar with the call of Semipalmated Plover. It is clear, however, that confusion could arise, and plumage features need to be checked carefully before an unfamiliar call is attributed to Semipalmated Plover.

NICK RIDDIFORD

Bird Observatory, Fair Isle, Shetland

Arboreal leaf-gleaning by Tree Pipit On 15th May 1980, at Wytham Woods, Oxfordshire, a Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis* flew up from a grassy glade and landed in an ash *Fraxinus* on the wood's edge. I watched it in perfect light from about 10 m with 7×50 binoculars for several minutes until it flew into the woods. It was deliberately walking along the 2-cm diameter branches (i.e. not grasping them with its toes), and would easily walk up a branch inclined at 45°, but would flutter on to another from any much steeper than that. In this way, it worked its way systematically up the tree, peering under leaves as it did so. On several occasions, it picked off and swallowed items, and even made three apparently successful flying sorties to leaves out of reach. A 1-cm-long caterpillar of the winter moth *Operophtera brumata* was found in a spray of leaves from this tree examined by Dr W. Wint. There were large numbers of these and other caterpillars in the woods, but from the pipit's confident manner it is thought unlikely that this is a newly acquired habit of exploiting an abundant food source. A quick search of the literature and enquiries of members of the Edward Grey Institute of Field Ornithology failed to produce any hint of this behaviour. Indeed, it is stated that it feeds 'not in the trees, but on the ground or in low herbage' (D. A. Bannerman, 1953, *The Birds of the British Isles*, vol. 2). I am grateful to Dr N. Collar for translating from P. van Hecke (*J. Orn.* 120: 270), who described feeding from leaves, but only from the ground. I have seen many Tree Pipits in trees, mostly in Africa, but have never seen the species feeding in them, nor moving about in the branches apart from minor shifting of position. The only truly forest member of the family, the rare and local Sokoke Pipit *A. sokokensis* of coastal East Africa, also perches in trees, but I have never seen it feed in them. A. S. Cheke (*in litt.*) has seen the Olive-backed Pipit *A. hodgsoni* in Japan walking along thin twigs, but does not recall it feeding in trees; he suggests that this previously undocumented habit may be a useful field character for Tree Pipit.

A. D. FORBES-WATSON

c/o Department of Zoology, South Parks Road, Oxford OX1 3PS

Tree Pipits behaving in a manner similar to this have been observed by Dr C. J. Bibby in Portugal and by Dr C. H. Fry in Nigeria. It may well not be unusual. Eds

Blackbird 'playing' with stick and attempting to mate with post The notes on Blackbirds *Turdus merula* 'playing' with inanimate objects (*Brit. Birds* 73: 355; 75: 34-35) prompt me to record the following. On 24th October 1981, beside a tree-lined beck in a suburb of Middlesbrough, Cleveland, I watched a first-winter male Blackbird knocking a small stick with its bill and picking it up in its bill and tossing it. The Blackbird then mounted a wooden 5×5 cm post about 10 cm high and apparently tried to mate with it.

NEIL P. DUMMIGAN

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Blackbird mounting fallen apple in October At 09.00 GMT on 16th October 1979, in my parents' garden in Gillingham, Kent, after a fortnight of fine warm weather, I observed a male Blackbird *Turdus merula* from about 20m going through the motions of copulation with a fallen apple. I watched for a minute or so as he mounted the apple three times: he always hopped on from the same ground position, dismounting to the side or rear; the actual movements while perched on the apple were uniquely indicative of copulation, the vent being pressed against the apple and the wings half spread and quivered rather than flapped. The motions were identical each time. After the third mounting, he flew off a short distance. A female Blackbird was in the vicinity, but I noted no close association between the two, although the male eventually flew off in her direction. I examined the apple, which was about 4cm in diameter, rotting, and of a rich brown colour with a few white specks. In October 1980, I observed similar behaviour by what was probably the same male Blackbird, although the performance was less intense; on this occasion, the fruit was one of a close array of Conference pears, again quite small fruit. K. Redshaw (*Brit. Birds* 65: 127) described similar behaviour by a Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca* with a grey stone in September at Dungeness, Kent; in that case, the stone was comparable in size with the warbler.

L. J. DAVENPORT

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Blackbirds holding leaves during territorial disputes The note on Blackbirds *Turdus merula* 'playing' with leaves (*Brit. Birds* 73: 355) and subsequent notes (75: 34-35) recalled the following. During February 1981, in my garden in Crawley, Sussex, my parents and I observed two male Blackbirds chasing each other up and down a border, one holding a large dead leaf in its bill. This behaviour, which lasted for several minutes, occurred almost daily, always in the same border, which was choked with dead leaves and contained a large rhododendron *Rhododendron ponticum*. Typically, as on 15th, a feeding Blackbird picked up a leaf, dropped it, picked up another, and then pursued the other Blackbird from under the rhododendron; when the leaf disintegrated, a leaf of sweet chestnut *Castanea sativa* about 7cm long was selected and held crosswise in the bill; this was later replaced by a large wad of leaves, with which the aggressor hopped off, a nearby Mistle Thrush *T. viscivorus* remaining unperturbed. Later in the month, wads of leaves were used frequently, and both Blackbirds were seen carrying them.

RACHEL WARREN

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There are several detailed records of such behaviour by fighting Blackbirds quoted by Len Howard (1952, *Birds as Individuals*) and by D. W. Snow (1958, *A Study of Blackbirds*). EDS

Call of Bonelli's Warbler Daily during 24th July to 28th August 1966, we saw up to 18 migrant Bonelli's Warblers *Phylloscopus bonelli* of the race *orientalis* at the Camlica Hills, Istanbul, Turkey. The only call we heard was a rather loud 'tup' (ARK) or 'chüp' (RFP), which was frequently repeated and, although quieter, was not unlike the usual note of Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*. This may well be the 'metallic "chirp"' referred to by P. D. Round (*Brit. Birds* 74: 444) of migrant *orientalis* in Crete. So distinctive is this call that, when we returned to the Camlica Hills on 12th August 1973, it was instantly recognisable, before confirmation by sight.

I. J. Ferguson-Lees (*Brit. Birds* 54: 397) referred to a quite harsh 'single or double metallic note . . . used in autumn', which may be this same call, but he did not differentiate between the two races when discussing call. We have not heard this call from the western race *P. b. bonelli* on its breeding grounds in France or Spain, nor from a vagrant in Britain which was presumably also of this race.

A. R. KITSON and R. F. PORTER
12 Hillside Terrace, Steyning, Sussex

P. D. Round (*Brit. Birds* 74: 444) described the call notes of migrant Bonelli's Warblers *Phylloscopus bonelli*. I noted the few calls heard from many in Israel in April 1982 as a loud, sharp 'chiup', whereas breeding birds in north Spain in June 1981 gave a finch-like, firm, squeaky 'tsooe', recalling Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris* rather than Willow Warbler *P. trochilus* to my ears.

R. A. HUME

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There now seems good evidence that the western and eastern races of Bonelli's Warblers have different call notes. EDS

Spotted Flycatchers catching and eating large Lepidoptera With reference to the note on Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* catching and eating large butterflies (*Brit. Birds* 75: 90-91), on 10th August 1975, in my garden at Liddington, Wiltshire, a Spotted Flycatcher caught a peacock *Inachis io* in flight which escaped apparently undamaged; on 17th August, one took seven small tortoiseshells *Aglais urticae* from a butterfly-bush *Buddleja davidii*. On three occasions, the prey was knocked against a branch and eaten, apparently wings as well. On 17th, there were more whites (Pieridae) than small tortoiseshells, but the flycatcher never attempted to take these. In the *Wiltshire Ornithological Society News* for January 1976, the editor (John R. Govett) commented that he had seen Spotted and Pied Flycatchers *Ficedula hypoleuca* take butterflies, including large white *Pieris brassica* and small white *Artogeia rapae*, adding that flycatchers seemed to show individual preferences for light or dark Lepidoptera.

STEPHEN B. EDWARDS

Hazeldene, Medbourne Lane, Liddington, Swindon, Wiltshire

On 6th October 1971, on St Agnes, Isles of Scilly, I watched a Spotted Flycatcher trying to catch a red admiral *Vanessa atalanta*; after two minutes, it succeeded and disappeared into cover.

C. W. WOODHEAD

101 Maes y Sam, Pentyrch, Cardiff CF4 8QR

On 30th September 1974, at Cavenham Heath, Suffolk, I observed a Spotted Flycatcher catch a red admiral, rap it several times against a branch, and eat it.

A. J. LAST

130 Fornham Road, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk

The following appeared in the *Lundy Field Society Report* for 1954: 'Spotted Flycatcher. On September 23rd one was seen . . . eating a Red Admiral butterfly . . . It hit it against the branch on which it was perched . . . the butterfly escaped twice and was recaptured. Eventually it was swallowed whole. On other dates in September, Spotted Flycatchers were seen catching Red Admirals.'

A. W. G. JOHN

Brook Cottage, Sampford Spiney, Yelverton, Devon PL20 7QX

In July 1954, at Saltford, Avon, a pair of Spotted Flycatchers caught large moths after dark by artificial light (*Brit. Birds* 60: 255-256). The largest moths, almost certainly yellow underwings *Triphaena pronuba*, were beaten on paving and killed. More recently, in Cornwall, I have seen Spotted Flycatchers catch and eat small tortoiseshells and, less often, both large and small whites.

BERNARD KING

Gull Cry, 9 Park Road, Newlyn, Penzance, Cornwall

During 9th-16th June 1981, at West Bagborough, Somerset, I identified three speckled woods *Pararge aegeria*, two green-veined whites *Artogeia napi* and one small white among items fed (wings intact) to their fledglings by a pair of Spotted Flycatchers. During 23rd-30th July, at another nest, a comma *Polygonia c-album* was fed to the young flycatchers.

A. P. RADFORD

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As these notes demonstrate, Spotted Flycatchers not infrequently catch and eat large butterflies and moths. EDS

Finches feeding on aphids in late autumn On 22nd October 1979, I observed several finch species pecking at the twigs and leaves of sycamores *Acer pseudoplatanus* in Howell Wood, near South Kirkby, Yorkshire. On closer inspection, the trees were seen to be infested with aphids. Until 6th November, a variety of birds took advantage of this food supply, the aphids remaining on twigs even after the leaves had fallen. As well as tits *Parus*, the following finches were involved (maximum numbers in parentheses): Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla* (25), Chaffinch *F. coelebs* (15), Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris* (15), Goldfinch *C. carduelis* (six) and Redpoll *C. flammea* (ten); the first two were the most regular. Also involved, in small numbers and less frequently, were House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, Tree Sparrow *P. montanus*, Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, Redwing *Turdus iliacus*, Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major* and Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*. On 21st and 28th November, Bramblings and Chaffinches were taking aphids still present on the twigs of silver birch *Betula pendula*. Although all the above finches, particularly Brambling and Chaffinch, sometimes feed on invertebrates in spring, they normally rely on seeds at other times.

KEITH D. ROBERTSON

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The timing, the range of species involved, and the apparent aphid density at this time of year are all of interest. EDS

Seventy-five years ago...

'SCOPS-OWL OFF ABERDEENSHIRE. It may be worth while to put on record that I have in my possession a male Scops-Owl (*Scops giu*) *Otus scops*, which was captured on a trawler about twenty-five miles off the coast of Aberdeenshire in October, 1900. This bird was in an exhausted state, and although the plumage was in fair condition it was much faded. From this arises another question: What is the nautical limit within which a bird may be called "British"? E. R. PATON.' (*Brit. Birds* 2: 204, November 1908)

Letter

Nest-sites of Grey Wagtail Mrs Anne Goodall's note entitled 'Unusual nest-sites of Grey Wagtail' *Motacilla cinerea* (*Brit. Birds* 75: 34) prompts me to set the record straight. Nesting by Grey Wagtails some distance from water is not common, but I have recorded such nests on at least a dozen occasions, and in 1972, in my paper summarising my analysis of BTO Nest Record Cards (*Bird Study* 19: 69-80), I noted that '19 of 673 nests for which the habitat was fully described were stated to be away from running water, at distances of 30 to several hundred yards'. In the *Hampshire Bird Report 1969*, I also noted that five of 37 nests found in 1969 were up to 220 yards (200m) from running water; one was on a ledge within an open wooden shed surrounded by conifers, and over 200 yards (180 m) from a stream to which the wagtails flew for food; ledges in ruined buildings away from water were also used. In Gwent and Herefordshire, I have found a number of nests in niches in stone barns well away from streams or rivers.

STEPHANIE J. TYLER

Yew Tree Cottage, Lone Lane, Penallt, Gwent NP54AJ

We have also received letters on Grey Wagtail nest-sites from Douglas Carr (Surrey), Robert Milne (Borders), R. Griffiths (Hampshire), C. S. L. Incedon (Wiltshire), M. S. Smith (Shropshire) and Miss P. A. Kirkpatrick (Surrey); distances from nearest running water ranged from 100m to 1 km. Clearly, such sites are not a new, or very unusual, feature of Grey Wagtail nesting behaviour. Eds

Announcements

Give someone a £1,000 Christmas present The 'British Birds' *Mystery Photographs Book*, which carries a £1,000 prize, would make a perfect Christmas present. Why not buy one to give to a friend? *BB* readers can obtain it for £3.80 (the usual price is £4.80) through British BirdShop (see page vii).

BB Tours During 1984, we shall be inviting *BB* subscribers to take part in some specially devised trips to good bird spots abroad. All the booking, accommodation and travelling arrangements will be made on our behalf by the experienced bird-tour operators Sunbird/Wings, but the trips will not

be advertised by them, since they are designed for—and participation will be restricted to—*BB* readers.

Further announcements will be made, but provisionally we are planning the following:

Late February 1984	France	A long weekend coach/minibus trip to the lakes south-east of Paris to look for White-tailed Eagles, Cranes and waterfowl (7-9 participants only)
September 1984	Cape May, USA	Ten days at this premier spot for fall migration
April 1985	Cyprus	An exploratory ten-day expedition at what should be the peak of spring migration

These special *BB* Tours will always be accompanied not only by an experienced Sunbird/Wings leader, but also by a *BB* birder. With two leaders always present, we aim to ensure that each trip caters for the wishes of participants at all levels of expertise (bearing in mind that everyone on the trip will be a *BB* subscriber, so presumably pretty keen!).

Watch out for further details.

News and comment

Robin Prytherch and Mike Everett

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

Bodmin Moor Nature Observatory This bold venture has been set up by Tony and Pamela Miller. Situated near Bolventor, in just about the centre of Bodmin Moor, Cornwall, the Observatory is in an ideal position for those who want to study and enjoy this upland habitat. About 70 species of bird breed within 4km of the Observatory, and additional migrant activity is seen along the adjacent valleys. Ringing is carried out regularly. Other aspects of natural history are also richly represented. Inland observatories in Britain are the exception (excluding inland ringing stations), and we wish it all success. Single, double and dormitory accommodation, and all meals, are available. The prospectus is available from Bodmin Moor Nature Observatory, Ninestones Farm, Common Moor, Cornwall PL14 6SD.

Manpower Services Commission helps bird observatory Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory has recently, in conjunction with the Manpower Services Commission, set up a project to ensure full coverage of its recording area and complete renovation of the observatory building. With grant-aid from the MSC and all wages paid, it has engaged a full-time warden, assistant warden/builder and part-time field assis-

tant/builder's labourer/clerical assistant. The warden appointed is Ian Hunter. Initially, the scheme, which started on 1st August, will last 12 months, but with strong possibilities of extension. Inevitably, it will result in a certain amount of disruption to the living accommodation of the hostel: potential visitors to the observatory are requested to ring Ian first to ensure that beds are available (0304 617341). Any other observatories interested in such a scheme should consult J. H. van der Dol, 39 Sandown Lees, Sandwich, Kent. We congratulate Ian Hunter on his appointment, and wish him good luck.

NCC small grants The Nature Conservancy Council has introduced a scheme whereby funds for small nature conservation projects can be made available quickly and with the minimum of administration work. Small grants will be awarded against projects costing up to £500. They are intended for new projects carried out by voluntary organisations or private individuals undertaking practical site- or species-conservation, and for work to increase awareness and understanding of nature conservation.

Electric fencing to protect nesting birds, grilles to protect bat colonies, scrub clearance, short-term wardening, small

power- and hand-tools, such as saws and spades, and display boards at reserves are examples of projects and purchases which will qualify. Let us hope that this scheme is taken up by those groups and individuals who might have thought their project too small to attract a grant. Many small projects are just as vital as the larger ones. For details, contact the NCC, 19/20 Belgrave Square, London SW1 8PY.

NCC publications It is probably not generally realised that the Nature Conservancy Council produces a whole series of books, booklets, leaflets and posters, which are available for purchase at very reasonable prices. Colour photographs are used profusely and have not only been well chosen but are also reproduced to an exceedingly high standard. There are 125 publications available, mostly priced at 10p to 60p each (some advisory leaflets are free), plus small postal charges. The NCC's 1982/83 mail-order catalogue is available from their Interpretative Branch, Attingham Park, Shrewsbury SY1 1TW.

Contributed by We are always keen to receive items for publication in this column and are grateful to those who contribute. There are two areas, however, which we should like to promote—illustrations and personalia—and we hope that you will help. If you have photographs which relate to topical items, then please submit them. Line-drawings (even cartoons) can also be slotted in where appropriate. We should also like to report or comment on the activities of bird-watchers: fieldwork incidents, job changes, expedition stories, and so on. Any items (amusing or otherwise) that might be of wide interest should be sent to us at the address on the inside front cover.

'BBC Wildlife' This month sees the first issue of this new magazine on the bookstalls. It takes over from *Wildlife*, the last issue of which appeared in October. As the name implies, it is a product of BBC Publications. The majority of the feature articles in the magazine will be linked to television and radio programmes transmitted in the month of publication. Other features will include children's pages and wildlife questions, the latter closely linked with the Radio 4 series 'Wildlife'. There will also be a monthly 'Bird Spot' which will feature a single species (Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris* in November). Apart from general information, it is hoped to include the latest research findings and current

survey work concerning the species. The magazine also hopes to report on, and publicise, surveys and other activities of the national organisations such as the RSPB, the BTO, the RSNC, and, we hope, *BB*.

We wish it well.

Birds on your screen Coming up soon on television are a number of programmes which should be of interest to *BB* readers. Two in the BBC's 'Wildlife on One' series in November and December are devoted entirely to birds. *Last Stronghold of the Eagles* shows staggering scenes of thousands of Bald Eagles *Haliaeetus leucocephalus* feeding together in southeast Alaska. Much closer to home, *Sparrows of St James's* is the Natural History Unit's first film on the House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*. The film is set largely in St James's Park, London, and the producer (RP) promises that it will show that House Sparrows are far more interesting and colourful than most birdwatchers would be prepared to admit. Watch out for these and others which will at least include bird sequences, such as 'The Natural World' on BBC 2 on Sundays (the new series title for purely wildlife 'World About Us' programmes).

Identifying birds with a micro-computer

Will the day come when one throws away one's field guides and turns instead to a micro-computer to help identify that strange bird? Hilton Computer Services of Orpington, Kent, has just taken the first steps in that direction, with a computer program designed to help the beginner—or the not-very-knowledgeable—to identify the commoner garden birds. In response to a series of 21 questions, one keys in information on size; shape, colour of different body parts, behaviour, and time of year when seen. The programme then compares your answers, and you can put in 'Don't know' if necessary, against the details of 55 common species, before producing an exact match (if you are lucky), or a list of probabilities in descending order of likelihood.

This particular program has several shortcomings. For example, it cannot distinguish between Willow Warbler and Chiffchaff because neither leg colour nor specific songs are included. Similarly, if one keys in yellowish underparts for an immature Willow Warbler, Greenfinch tends to leap to the top of the probability list. There are also a few errors still to be removed. As an idea, however, it is good, and capable of almost infinite expansion and refinement, though there might perhaps be more of a market for a program to

identify birds in areas where good field guides are lacking (e.g. South America), rather than in Britain and Europe, where flicking through a field guide is rather quicker than the ten minutes or so required to load and then use this program.

At the moment, the program is available only on cassette, and will run only on a Sinclair Spectrum with 48K memory. I am grateful to the headmaster, Mr I. R. Thomas, and the pupils of the Kingswood County Primary School, Gloucestershire, for allowing me to test this program on their computer. (*Contributed by MAO*)

Atlas: a man for all seasons The Winter Atlas Project now enters its third and final year. Anyone who wishes to help, but who is not in touch with their local organiser, should write to their National Organiser, Dr Peter Lack (BTO, Beech Grove, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 5NR) or Seán Fleming (40 Melbourne Road, Bishopstown, Cork, Republic of Ireland).

As well as being Britain's co-ordinator for this Winter Atlas, Peter Lack has just taken over from Dr J. T. R. Sharrock as Britain's Delegate on the European Ornithological Atlas Committee, the body which will be co-ordinating the Continent-wide European Breeding Bird Atlas project during 1985-88.

Welcome 'Bliki'! This strange-sounding name is the Icelandic word for the Eider; it will now become more familiar to European ears, since it is the name chosen for a new magazine including papers and notes on the birds of Iceland. This is the first such journal and will surely be greatly welcomed by all European birders and ornithologists. It will be published at least once a year, but there is no standard subscription: each issue will be priced separately on publication. Anyone wishing to receive the bulletin regularly can, however, have their name put on a special mailing list. The first, 56-page issue is mostly in Icelandic, but has English summaries. It includes the third annual report on rare birds in Iceland (covering 1981) and papers on a variety of subjects, including an influx of Short-eared Owls in autumn 1982, the first record of Shore Lark in Iceland (it was shot), an influx of Waxwings in autumn 1981 and an influx of Bean Geese in October 1981. The journal is attractive and well produced. It is available for £3.15 (including postage), payable by cheque on receipt of an invoice, from Aevor Petersen, Museum of Natural History, PO Box 5320, 125 Reykjavik, Iceland.

Clouded Yellows Information received so far indicates that this year has been the best one for the Clouded Yellow *Colias crocea* in Britain for many years, probably the best since 1955, when 2,060 were recorded. Last year only about 120 of these butterflies were reported. The best-ever year for this migrant species was 1947, when the total recorded was estimated at 36,000. That figure, however, was probably a gross underestimate, as one observer on a ship in the English Channel that October encountered an estimated 100,000 flying SSW on an 80 km front!

An annual report on the immigration of Lepidoptera to the British Isles is compiled by R. F. Bretherton and J. M. Chalmers-Hunt and published in *The Entomologist's Record*. Several birdwatchers already contribute records to this report and it is hoped that many more will do so in the future. It would be especially valuable and interesting to gauge the full extent of this year's immigration of Clouded Yellows, a conspicuous and easily recognised species, apart from the not uncommon white or pale yellow form *helice* of the female which can look very like one of the 'cabbage whites' in flight. Clouded Yellows seen in late summer and autumn, sometimes moving southwards, are the British-born generation of the immigrants which arrived here from the Continent in May and June. Records, if possible giving numbers of individuals and flight direction, should be sent to R. F. Bretherton, Folly Hill, Birtley Green, Bramley, Guildford, Surrey GU5 0LE. (*Contributed by John F. Burton*)

Are our field guides really up to standard? Overheard in a hide at a Norfolk reserve:

ELDERLY LADY: 'What are they over there, Walter, those with the long necks?' (A flock of Canada Geese.)

WALTER: 'Where? Show me where you're looking.'

ELDERLY LADY: 'Over there, in the grass, on the right.'

WALTER trained his binoculars right and then, after a short pause, replied: 'I dunno, they look like sheep to me.'

(There were no sheep to be seen.)

(*Contributed by P. Darling*)

New Recorder for Cheshire Ron Harrison, Speyside, 8 St Albans Crescent, West Timperley, Altrincham, Cheshire WA14 5NY, has taken over from J. P. Guest as Recorder for Cheshire.

Recent reports

R. A. Hume and K. Allsopp



These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records

The dates in this report refer to August unless otherwise stated.

The hot, dry anticyclonic weather of July continued, albeit slightly cooler in the first two weeks of August as high pressure to the west produced north to northeast winds. Hot south to southwesterlies, with thundery outbreaks, arrived after 14th as the anticyclone transferred to the Continent. After 24th, a further anticyclonic movement to the north-west gave easterlies until the end of the month, when pressure rapidly declined and the first autumnal depressions raced across the Atlantic, bringing gales and excitement to be covered fully next month.

That tern. . .

Chief topic of conversation during the month, and a source of much argument and discussion, was a tern discovered on Blakeuey Point (Norfolk) on 9th, which stayed in the general area (but was by no means easy to locate after the first few days) into September (plate 231). The general feeling that it was a small **Royal Tern** *Sterna maxima* changed in some observers' minds to the belief that it must be a **Lesser Crested Tern** *S. bengalensis*. Some claimed field experience which supported this alternative theory and museum studies also clearly support such a diagnosis, but others with full field experience of all likely species claimed

231. Tern, perhaps Royal *Sterna maxima* or Lesser Crested *S. bengalensis*, with Sandwich Terns *S. sandvicensis*, Norfolk, August 1983 (*P. Wheeler*)



equally strongly that it ruled out Lesser Crested. Do Lesser Cresteds always look smaller than Sandwich Terns *S. sandvicensis*, or can they appear bigger in flight as some people suggest and measurements can indicate? If it is a Royal why is it so small? Why is it so dark? Why is it so difficult! It is not easy to isolate the factors which created the problems: lack of knowledge or an aberrant bird? These terns seem determined to become the major controversial group in current identification discussions. Another very rare tern reported was a **Sooty Tern** *S. fuscata* off Guernsey (Channel Islands) on 3rd September. At Blakeney on 27th there was a fine adult **Roseate Tern** *S. dougallii*, and others were reported from Orkney on 31st July and Hengistbury Head (Dorset), where up to six appeared between 28th and 31st. **Black Terns** *Chlidonias niger* were unremarkable, but 21 off Skokholm (Dyfed) was an unusual total there. **White-winged Black Terns** *C. leucopterus* seem also to have been scarce, with one at Dungeness (Kent) from 5th to 18th, one at Stewartby (Bedfordshire) from 10th to 12th, and one at Ballycotton (Co. Cork) on 29th and 30th.

Gulls and skuas

Mediterranean Gulls *Larus melanocephalus* included at least four at Sandwich Bay (Kent) during the month, one at Belfast on 7th, one near Machynlleth (Dyfed) on 11th, a single at Filey Brigg (North Yorkshire) on 30th and two at Blakeney on 28th. At Spurn Point (North Humberside) 59 **Little Gulls** *L. minuta* passed on 9th. A strange record of a **Sabine's Gull** *L. sabini* comes from near Ellesmere (Shropshire) on 17th July; another was in Orkney on 27th, only the second Orkney record. Yellow-legged **Herring Gulls** *L. argentatus michahellis* were reported from Sandwich—with four on 18th—and Spurn on 25th and 29th. **Great Skuas** *Stercorarius skua* were mostly unexceptional, but 34 at Spurn on 28th was a fair total; **Arctic Skuas** *S. parasiticus* were more entertaining, with a good sprinkling off north Norfolk (often chasing the well-watched Blakeney tern flock, including the Lesser Crested/Royal itself); 100 on 13th and 420 on 28th off Spurn; and 332 off Filey Brigg on the last date. **Pomarine Skuas** *S. pomarinus* included few in Norfolk, but one or two on most days after 13th at Spurn, eight at Sandwich Bay on 7th, six at Larne (Co. Antrim) on 12th and two off Filey Brigg on 28th. A total of 41 **Long-tailed Skuas** *S. longicaudus* was noted off Papa



232. Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus*.
Norfolk, August 1983 (Joe Reed)

Westray (Orkney) from 11th to 13th (35 on 12th); singles passed Spurn on 13th and 24th and Filey Brigg on 25th; and odd ones were reported from north Norfolk (plates 232 & 234). As always, we unfortunately have no details from Flamborough Head (Humberside).

Shearwaters and petrels

30 **Cory's Shearwaters** *Calonectris diomedea* passed Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork) on 18th. **Great Shearwaters** *Puffinus gravis* included two singles between Mull and Tiree (Argyll), three singles off the Smalls Lighthouse, south of St Ann's Head (Dyfed), 50 passing Cape Clear Island on 17th, and 120 off northwest Ireland on 27th and 28th. The latter region produced 70 **Sooty Shearwaters** *P. griseus* from the same boat trip, and one was seen off Aberdysynni (Gwynedd) on 22nd, but numbers were higher in the east: 320 passed Papa Westray on 12th; passage at Spurn between 12th and 29th peaked at 130 on 13th; and there were 113 off Filey Brigg on 28th. Off the Smalls Lighthouse on 14th, 405 **Storm Petrels** *Hydrobates pelagicus* included 375 in a raft on the flat-calm sea.

Wading birds

The long-staying **Crane** *Grus grus* in Orkney disappeared in mid month. Another was seen soaring about near Blackpool (Lancashire) on 25th. There was a **Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax* at Ballycotton from 12th into September. Waders proper included **Kentish Plovers** *Charadrius alexandrinus* at Dungeness from 13th to 18th, at Sandwich Bay on 1st and 22nd to 23rd, and on Blakeney Point in mid month. Exquisite young **Dotterels** *C. morinellus* turned up on Blakeney Point from 26th to 28th and on Bardsey (Gwynedd) on 28th. A **Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus* was reported flying by over Great James Street, London WC1, on 28th July! **Marsh Sand-**

pipers *Tringa stagnatilis* turned up, at Holme (Norfolk) from 29th July to 6th (plate 233) and at Elmley (Kent) on 12th. A **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** *Calidris acuminata* rewarded sharp-eyed observers looking for a reported Pectoral Sandpiper *C. melanotos* at Frodsham (Cheshire) on 27th, but disappointed many by its early departure a day later. Real **Pectoral Sandpipers** were almost non-existent, but one was found at Dungeness on 18th. A **Wilson's Phalarope** *Phalaropus tricolor* was at Kinsale (Co. Cork) on 29th. **White-rumped Sandpipers** *C. fuscicollis* headed the Nearctic invasion, with singles at Tacumshin (Co. Wexford) on 2nd and 28th, Lady's Island Lake (Co. Wexford) on 27th and Sandymount (Dublin) on 28th. A **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** *Tryngites subruficollis* came early to Tacumshin, on 1st. **Long-billed Dowitchers** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* were found at Filey (North Yorkshire) on 2nd and Ballycotton on 13th. Fair Isle (Shetland) had a **Lesser Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* towards the end of the month, but perhaps the best Nearctic wader of the period was a **Stilt Sandpiper** *Micropalama himantopus* at Tacumshin on 1st. Oh for a good one in England! **Curlew Sandpipers** *C. ferruginea* were fairly sparse, but there were 32 at Sandwich Bay on 1st. A **Temminck's Stint** *C. temminckii* was at Dungeness on 13th and 14th. **Whimbrels** *Numenius phaeopus* included a good 116 at Filey Brigg on 7th.

Spotted Crakes *Porzana porzana* occurred at Stanpit Marsh (Dorset), where there were



two all month, at Titchwell (Norfolk), at Minsmere (Suffolk) from 20th, and two or three at Ballycotton from 23rd. **Corncrakes** *Crex crex* were noted three times at Spurn during 14th to 27th.

Passerine and near-passerine migrants

Typical early autumn stuff, especially on the English east coast, did come on time, but in no great numbers. **Wrynecks** *Jynx torquilla* came—after the earliest at Sandwich on 14th—mostly around 21st to 26th, singles in the main, from Cape Clear to Spurn, where there were three on 24th. **Icterine Warblers** *Hippolais icterina*—after early ones at Portland Bill (Dorset) and Cape Clear from 14th—arrived mostly from 18th to 30th, in such diverse places as Fetlar (Shetland), Old Head of Kinsale (Co. Cork) and Brownstown Head (Co. Waterford), Spurn, Wells (Norfolk), Lymington (Hampshire), Skokholm (Dyled), Bardsey, and Walney Island (Cumbria). **Melodious Warblers** *H. poly-*

233. Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*, Norfolk, August 1983 (P. Vines)





234. Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus*, Norfolk, August 1983 (Joe Reed)

glotta, after one at Dawlish Warren (Devon) on 31st July, appeared from 18th to 27th, except for four at Bardsey from 9th; there were singles as far north as Walney Island, seven on Cape Clear Island, five on Hook Head (Co. Wexford), three at Portland and two at the Old Head of Kinsale. **Barred Warblers** *Sylvia nisoria* from 10th onwards reached Fetlar, Orkney, Walney Island, Filey, Spurn, Wells, Landguard Point (Suffolk), Sandwich Bay and Dungeness. One **Bluethroat** *Luscinia svecica* was recorded: at Birling Gap (Kent) on 30th. **Aquatic Warblers** *Acrocephalus paludicola* put on a moderate showing. From 10th to 24th they occurred at Sandwich Bay, Radipole Lake (Dorset), Portland and Lodmoor (Dorset), Portsmouth (Hampshire), Hengistbury Head, and Marazion (Cornwall), which was the only site to have more than one (four individuals on 23rd and 24th). **Red-backed Shrikes** *Lanius collurio* were associated with these migrants at Cape Clear, Dungeness, Sandwich Bay, Blakeney and Fetlar between 18th and 31st, with four at Sandwich being the best score. A **Woodchat Shrike** *L. senator* made landfall at Selsey Bill (West Sussex) on 6th September, and **Tawny Pipits** *Anthus campestris* were there on 28th and 29th and at Newhaven (East Sussex) on 31st. **Greenish Warblers** *Phylloscopus trochiloides* appeared at Waxham (Norfolk) from 10th to 12th, Fetlar on 22nd,

with another on 24th, and two on 29th, and at Wells from 25th to 27th. A **Bonelli's Warbler** *P. bonelli* spent the latter half of the month in the Isles of Scilly (coming early to avoid the crush later on?). A **Subalpine Warbler** *S. cantillans* was trapped at Norwick on Unst (Shetland) on 14th and stayed into September. The well-trodden shingle of Blakeney Point yielded another goodie, in the shape of a **Rose-coloured Starling** *Sturnus roseus*, on 22nd. This is a species surprisingly often recorded, late in the summer, far to the north, and once again we have such records: from Coll (Argyll) from 9th to 13th and North Ronaldsay (Orkney) on 11th. A **Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella brachydactyla* was on Cape Clear on 28th. On 11th, an **Alpine Swift** *Apus melba* sailed over Dungeness. **Ortolan Buntings** *Emberiza hortulana* reached Hengistbury Head on 14th and 26th.



Cape Clear between 18th and 21st and on 28th, and both Portland Bill and Cley (Norfolk) on 20th. Cape Clear Island also had a **Scarlet Rosefinch** *Carpodacus erythrinus* on 28th, a most productive day all round. Interesting odds and ends included a **Marsh Warbler** *A. palustris* at Sandwich on 11th, and up to four **Wood Warblers** *P. sibilatrix* at a time on Bardsey. At Cley, there was a **Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava* of the black-headed race *feldegg* around 6th and 7th; and at Selsey Bill, a **Serin** *Serinus serinus* on 7th. Serins, incidentally, were proved to breed for the first time on Guernsey. **Whinchats** *Saxicola rubetra* were noted in good numbers on the English east coast towards the end of the month, with 114 on 30th and 173 on 31st at Sandwich Bay. There were 67 **Wheatears** *Oenanthe oenanthe* there too on 30th. **Pied Flycatchers** *Ficedula hypoleuca* moved a little earlier, with good numbers in Hampshire from 8th and small flocks at Selsey Bill around 11th and 12th. There were 32 at Sandwich Bay on 10th and 45 on 11th; 14 at Filey Brigg; about 50 at Blakeney Point on 20th; and a scattering inland about that time too. **Fieldfares** *Turdus pilaris* arrived early, reaching Sandwich on 1st, Spurn from 8th and Bardsey from 10th.

Recent rarities decisions

The bunting at Sizewell (Suffolk) in April 1982 considered by some to be a **Pine Bunting** *Emberiza leucocephalos* and by others to be a **Rock Bunting** *E. cia* is to be accepted as neither, since the possibility of its being an aberrant **Yellowhammer** *E. citrinella* cannot be ruled out.

Latest news

In mid October, almost nothing from elsewhere, but the extreme southwest, especially Scilly, was 'crawling with Yanks'. St Mary's produced **Cliff Swallow** *Hirundo pyrrhonota* (first for Britain and Ireland), **Upland Sandpiper** *Bartramia longicauda*, **Grey-cheeked** *Catharus minimus* and **Swainson's Thrushes** *C. ustulatus*, and a second **Bobolink** *Dolichonyx oryzivorus*; St Agnes produced a second **Parula Warbler** *Parula americana* (after earlier one on Tresco) and **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** *Pheucticus ludovicianus*; Tresco produced a second **Solitary Sandpiper** *Tringa solitaria* and **Red-eyed Vireo** *Vireo olivaceus*; last species also reported from mainland of Cornwall, where **American Redstart** *Setophaga ruticilla* near St Just and **Lesser Golden Plover** at Stithian's Reservoir. Also, **Rustic Bunting** *Emberiza rustica* at Beachy Head (East Sussex).

Reviews

The 'British Birds' Mystery Photographs Book. By J. T. R. Sharrock. British Birds, Biggleswade, 1983. 32 pages; over 40 black-and-white photographs. £4.80.

The essence of this book is to identify correctly the 13 birds contained within its pages. Forty-two of the birds are featured in the black-and-white photographs. Readers will be familiar with the regular *British Birds* 'Mystery photographs' feature and this book is basically a giant-sized version of the monthly puzzle. Anyone who has taken sufficient interest in 'Mystery photographs' to feel pleased at instantly identifying the bird, pleased at eventually solving it by reference to books, frustrated at not being able even to guess at the species involved, annoyed at themselves that the previous month's considered identification or guess was wrong, or inquisitive enough to read the next month's identity explanation, will enjoy the challenge of this book.

The standard of photography, considering the book's purpose, is surprisingly high and, under the circumstances, it is forgivable that a few birds have legs, bills or important plumage characteristics either hidden by foliage, food or water or turned away from the observer. Like 'Mystery photographs', the degree of difficulty varies from photograph to photograph: some appear instantly identifiable, some look as though they can readily be narrowed down to a few or a pair of species and, it is hoped, reference to books will eliminate all but the correct one, and a few don't seem to conform to any particular species or even family.

The forty-third bird does not appear in photographic form, but as a series of clues in various parts of the book. This is the aspect that will appeal to all puzzle buffs because of the number

and diversity of the clues which have obviously been devised to stretch mental agility to its limits. It seems unlikely that the forty-third bird will reveal itself without considerable effort and, with a prize of at least £1,000 at stake, there is no reason why it should be easy to flush out.

The prize, which could be as high as £4,300 depending upon sales of the book, will be presented to the person who submits the first wholly correct solution to be received. The submission date will be judged by postmark as no entries will be opened until the anniversary of publication, in October 1984. If no entirely correct answer is found, an annual perusal of entries will continue until one is received. The winner's name and the full solution will be published in *British Birds*.

Even without the lure of the prize, which is considerable, this is a fascinating and thoroughly enjoyable book, alternately frustrating and satisfying and, above all, compulsive.

PETER LANSDOWN

Peter Lansdown's reviewing of this book does not disqualify him from taking part in this quest. Eds

The Big Bird Race. By Bill Oddie and David Tomlinson. Collins, London, 1983. 160 pages; 15 black-and-white plates; numerous line-drawings. £3.95.

It is tremendous fun. This is a book to read on those dismal December evenings when thoughts of springtime birding are especially welcome. Although it had the serious purpose of raising £6,000 for wildlife charities, this competition between two four-man teams—one representing *Country Life* magazine and the other the Fauna and Flora Preservation Society—to see the maximum number of species in one day is a highly entertaining story.

This sort of competitive birding is criticised periodically by those who want all birdwatching to be useful and scientific. Well, I'm sure that the wildlife charities think that it was useful. But it was also a lot of fun, by the sound of things.

I have done it myself, on a small scale. Last year, two five-man teams made up of members of our local YOC group, one led by Peter Holden and the other by me, used the annual YOC sponsored bird count as an excuse for such a challenge. We restricted ourselves to two Bedfordshire 10-km squares and to 4½ hours (07.30-12.00), but were up to all the 'experts' tricks (e.g. Peter Holden used *two* cars). My two children chose to be in Peter Holden's team, so I'm glad to report that my team soundly thrashed them, by 86 to 74. Such totals are puny, compared with those achieved in *The Big Bird Race*. The principle, however, is much the same: dashing around from one piece of choice habitat to the next, constantly missing the expected and chancing on the unexpected, eventually finding most of the likely species, but always fearful that the opposition is doing better. The *Country Life* and FFPS teams did it in style, with *Porsche 911 Cabriolet* and *Saab Turbo* and *Mercedes G-wagen* and *Land Rover* and walkie-talkies and back-up teams and smoked-salmon sandwiches (and, very nearly, a helicopter). Not fair? Not so much fun? Less like real birding? Well, perhaps; but the accounts, by David Tomlinson for *Country Life* and by Bill Oddie for the FFPS, impart the full flavour of a no-holds-barred encounter between two sets of really professional day-twitchers. One is soon carried along by the headlong dash. Be warned, it makes hectic reading!

There are contrasting styles: the *Country Life* team (David Tomlinson, Peter Smith, Jeremy Sorensen and Bill Urwin) sounds ultra-efficient; the FFPS team (John Gooders, Tim Inskipp, Bill Oddie and Cliff Waller) seems to stumble from crisis to crisis, constantly in fear of espionage, misdirection or outright sabotage by their opponents. The book as a whole reads rather like an up-to-date, motorised, frantic *Three Men in a Boat*, with the added zest of rivalry. Laurel Tucker's exquisite drawings which adorn the book evoke the atmosphere of birding in East Anglia (but it is the tranquil East Anglia of quiet misty mornings, not the East Anglia reverberating with the roar of powerful cars and the thunder of galloping twitchers).

After their 24 hours of tearing around Suffolk and Norfolk, the two teams end up with totals differing by only seven species. Which team won? If you don't know already, you'll have to buy the book to find out. Unless you disapprove of birdwatching being fun, you'll enjoy it. I browsed a bit, and then read it from cover to cover (something that reviewers do with relatively few books!). Now, as I remember episodes such as the signalling *Country Life* helpers (actually a lighthouse), the nonplussed TV film crew at a 30-seconds-to-see-a-Hawfinch stop, and the secret welly-boot cache, I am still smiling.

I think I'll challenge Peter Holden's mob again next year . . .

J. T. R. SHARROCK

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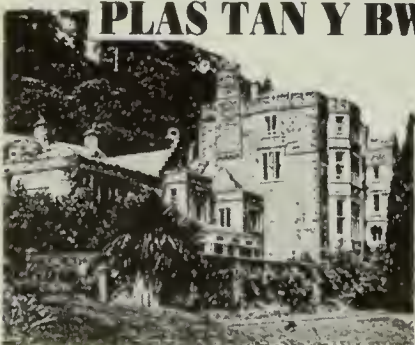
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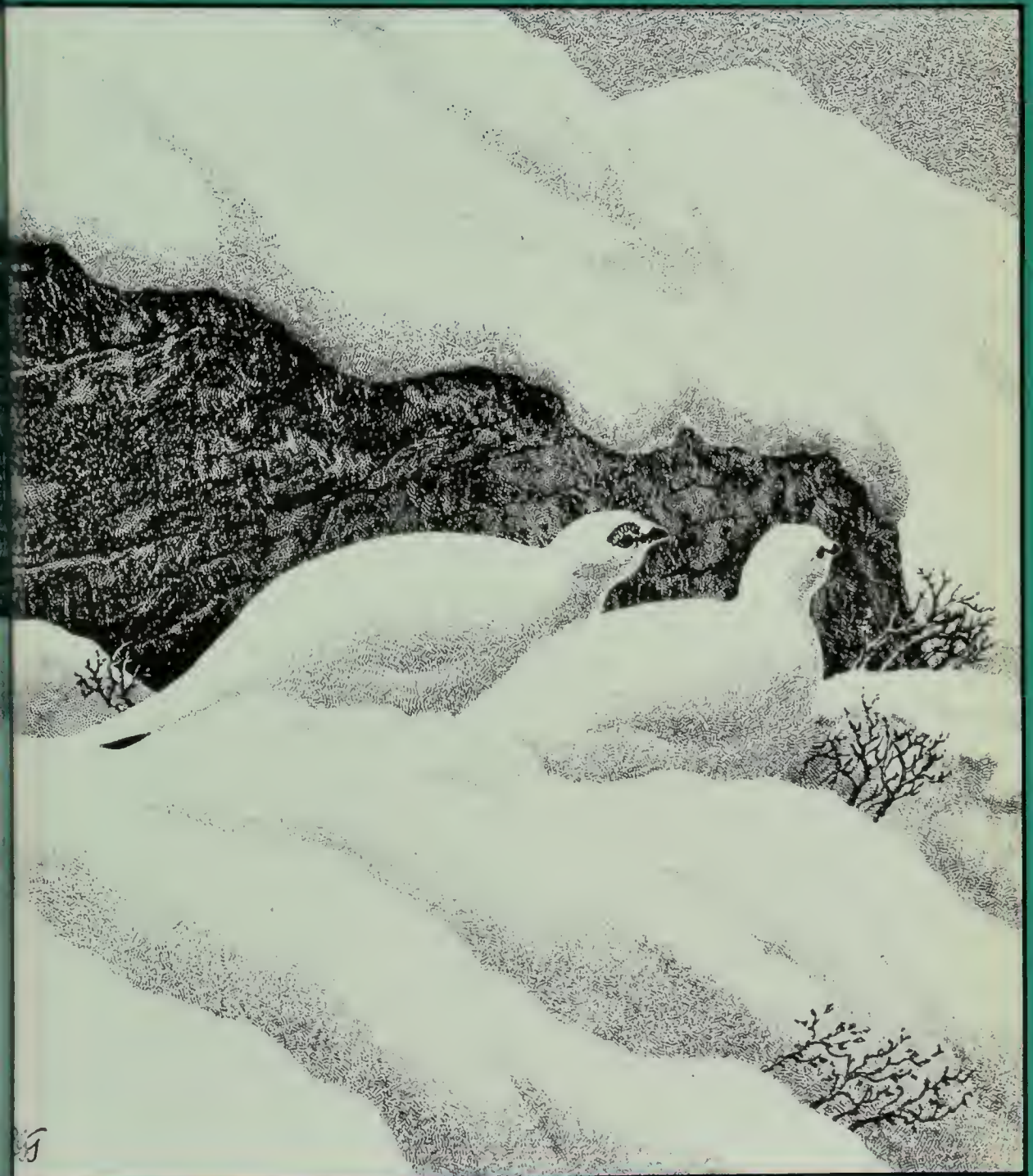
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Purple Sandpipers breeding in Scotland
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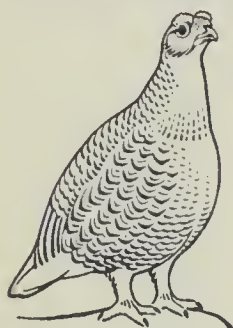
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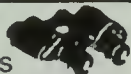
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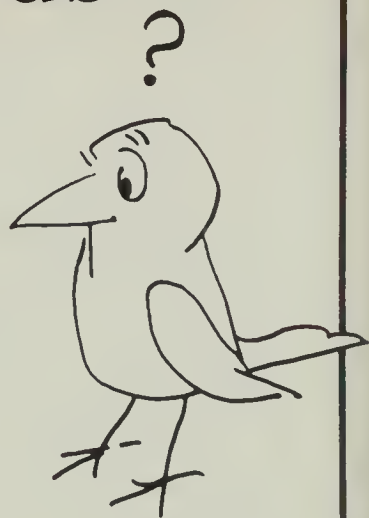
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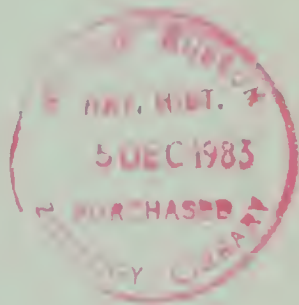
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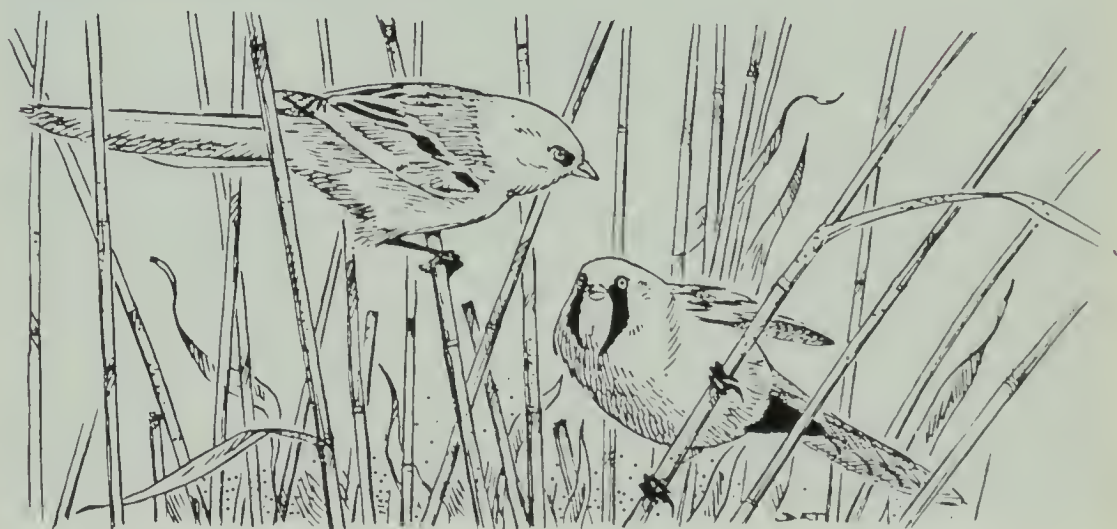
British Birds

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Studies of west Palearctic birds

186. Bearded Tit



Colin J. Bibby

The Bearded Tit (as I shall insist on calling it) *Panurus biarmicus* is a rather peculiar bird. Taxonomically, there is nothing else like it. It even has a newly described species of feather mite not yet known from any other bird (Cerny 1978). It is confiding and locally numerous so has been quite well studied. Nests are not easy to find, especially without damaging the vegetation, so its breeding biology is not fully known. Bearded Tits are easy to mist-net, so have been much ringed with some interesting results.

The bird is not a tit of the *Parus* kind in any way; it has merely acquired an imprecise vernacular name. It may be classified in the Paradoxornithidae, a family (or sometimes a sub-family ending in -inae) whose name implies some difficulties. The rest of this group are parrotbills of eastern Palearctic and Oriental distribution. They are babbler-like and sometimes included in the Timaliidae, which is itself a large and miscellaneous group. The Bearded Tit is the only species in its genus and is not much like any of its taxonomic neighbours. If the Bearded Tit does belong to the family Para-



235. Adult male Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus*, Norfolk, May 1943 (Eric Hosking)

doxornithidae, then the family is wrongly named. It should be Panuridae, derived from the first named genus within it. Field ornithologists will prefer to ignore these niceties and take it that there is nothing else much like the Bearded Tit. It is not related to the Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* or to the Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*. These just happen to be two more birds without totally logical vernacular names, whose resemblances to the Bearded Tit are fortuitous or the results of convergence.

The taxonomic position has caused problems for the tidy-minded over the bird's vernacular name. There has been a recent but not consistent tendency to offer the rather clumsy Bearded Reedling as an alternative. Reedling is an old local name which has a certain charm and appropriateness though is perhaps a bit whimsical to modern tastes. It would do perfectly well without being qualified by Bearded, since there are no other birds in the genus. Calling this species the Reedling would be analogous to the maintenance of Dunnock for *Prunella modularis* rather than renaming this bird as the Common or Hedge Accentor. A third option, suggested by

Voous (1977) and supported by Dr J. T. R. Sharrock (*in litt.*), would be Bearded Tit Babbler or Bearded Tit-babbler. Personally, I find this new, clumsy, and artificial. If these are acceptable faults, then Bearded Parrotbill would be tidier and would better match the family in which the species most happily resides. Who would swallow such a change? So why not keep the accepted name of Bearded Tit? I am unsure why the name-changers have not had a go at the Long-tailed Tit on the same grounds of not being a proper tit. Long-tailed Scrubling? Heaven forbid!

Bearded Tits are unmistakable. The male is a strikingly beautiful bird, differing from the predominantly cinnamon-brown female in having a grey head, black undertail-coverts and black 'moustaches'. The whirring flight is characteristic of that of birds with short wings and long tails; they are also often seen climbing and hanging in reeds, with great agility and some comedy when, for instance, perching on two stems being blown in the wind. Few people may realise how at home the Bearded Tit is on the ground, where it hops along the mud with tail cocked. Compared with the real tits, with tree-searching adaptations, the legs are longer and the feet less powerful. On superficial examination, one might guess that this was a terrestrial bird rather than a climber. The bill lacks the power of the true tit's: it is conical and rather fine, most closely resembling that of a *Carduelis* finch. This is a clear case of convergence to a bill design suitable for precision extraction of rather small seeds. There is a marked sexual dimorphism in bill size, not simply caused by differences of body size, which are small. No studies have been made to ascertain the significance of this.

Juveniles differ from adult females in being short-tailed and having a bandit-like black face mask. Their sex can be determined by bill colour: brown in the case of females and yellow in males. After the autumn moult, first-years are indistinguishable from adults. Bearded Tits can be elusive in dense reed-beds, especially out of the breeding season and in wind of any strength. They are then detected by the characteristic 'pinging' contact call usually uttered by a moving group. Inexperienced or over-optimistic observers can be misled by the call of the Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus* which frequently emanates from unseen birds in the same habitat. The Bearded Tit call is, however, quite distinct and should be recognised with certainty even if the birds remain hidden. Vocalisations are described and discussed by van den Elzen (1977a).

On a world scale, the Bearded Tit occurs in a band from western Europe to the Far East. It is patchy in occurrence because of its requirement for reed-beds; since these are everywhere being eliminated by drainage, some sites are rather isolated from their neighbours. Taxonomists have worked up several controversies on the distribution of subspecies. The simplest view is that there is clinal variation, with the plumage being darker and more brightly coloured towards the west. This range of variation can be split into two, with the western birds being the nominate subspecies and the eastern *P. b. russicus* adjoining somewhere between eastern Europe and the Middle East, where the clinal variation is most sharply marked (Vaurie 1954, 1959). Kumerloeve (1958) named a subspecies, *P. b. kossiwigi*, from Amik Golu (Turkey) from two skins of each sex which were said to be



236. Adult male Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus* at nest with five young, Norfolk, June 1952; note black 'face band' (Kevin Carlson)

unusually reddish-brown. Spitzer (1973) rejected this race, but resurrected *P. b. turcestanicus* for all those east of the Caspian. I suspect that this debate will continue, but doubt its productivity. There is great individual variation in some characters, and only a small number of skins available for study from the critical areas.

In western Europe, there has been a recent increase in numbers and range. Creation of the Oost Flevoland polder in the Netherlands raised that country's population from a few hundred to a few thousand pairs in the

early 1960s. Irruptive movements spread birds in Britain, Ireland, Scandinavia, France, Germany and Italy, with many records of new breeding sites and range expansions in the last 20 years. A spectacular colonisation occurred in Sweden, particularly at Lake Tåkern. The first record in the country was in 1965, yet by autumn 1974 there were 5,000-10,000 individuals at Tåkern alone (Björkman & Tyrberg 1982). This nucleus now repopulates smaller outlying colonies which tend to disappear in bad winters, while the main colony is so huge that it would be most unlikely to be eliminated by less than a run of bad winters perhaps coupled with an increase in commercial reed-cutting.

Numbers in Britain have also shown recent increases. In the early part of this century, the species was rare and confined to the extensive reed-beds of the Norfolk Broads. Numbers had probably been reduced by loss of sites and the species was also subject to much human persecution. Eggs were worth four shillings a dozen, so were much collected (Booth 1881 and further references in Axell 1966). Only 2-4 pairs were known in 1947 after reductions caused by the 1946-47 winter. A few years later, coastal floods damaged many sites, so recovery was slow. Ten years later, substantial irruptions started to occur at the larger colonies in East Anglia, and this heralded the beginning of a period of range expansion in Britain (Axell 1966; Newton 1978). The population was estimated at 590 or more pairs in 11 counties in 1974 (O'Sullivan 1976) and may subsequently have reached higher numbers. Local increases may be spectacular. For example, Leighton Moss in Lancashire was colonised in 1973, when one pair bred; this was followed by three, six and 16 pairs in the next three summers (Wilson 1977). The species now breeds regularly at 36 of the 109 reed-beds larger than 2 ha in England and Wales (Bibby & Lunn 1982). It has spread farther than shown by Sharrock (1976) and is distributed from Kent to the southwest, and north to Yorkshire and Lancashire, with an outlying colony in the Republic of Ireland. Most suitable sites are probably now occupied. Many of these reed-beds did not even exist early in this century, when Bearded Tit numbers were very low.

Spitzer (1973) postulated that the recent increase in numbers in western Europe was due to the spread of the eastern race *P. b. russicus*. He alleged that the nominate subspecies lacked the gut adaptations for winter seed-eating and, as an insectivore, was incapable of surviving in areas with regularly cold winters. Mead & Pearson (1974) drew attention to the fact that Bearded Tits were present in Britain at least 300 years ago (Ray 1674) and so must have lived through the severe winters of Dickensian and other fame. Furthermore, they were described as eating reed seeds and having appropriate guts 150 years ago, and have presumably done so for a good deal longer (Yarrell 1839). Spitzer's hypothesis therefore lacks support from the evidence. Similarly, I do not see why the 'catastrophic selection' resulting from heavy mortality in 1947 (Richards 1975) should have rendered the species so dynamic. If there were dispersive individuals in the population able to colonise new and remote sites, they could have done so if their more sedentary kin had not all died.

It seems to me that the sudden spread of the Bearded Tit has something



237. Adult male Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus*, Yugoslavia, June 1978 (Kevin Carlson)

of the same inexplicability as do range changes of any species. I have doubts about the involvement of different subspecies of rather dubious differentiation and recognisability. Perhaps the expansion was caused primarily by the huge numbers produced on the new Dutch polders. These certainly irrupted in autumn and were probably the colonists of many new areas. A second point deserving attention is that—unlike, say, the Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*—the Bearded Tit had a fragmented distribution in western Europe before its expansion (there is a good map in Björkman & Tyrberg 1982). Apart from its expansion northwards into Sweden, it has therefore more filled in gaps in its distribution rather than expanded into virgin territory. This suggests that it probably experienced a range expansion followed by a contraction at some unknown time in the past.

Bearded Tits are insectivorous in the summer, but switch to seed-eating from the late autumn to early spring (Bibby 1981). This involves marked changes in the gut anatomy (Spitzer 1972). They tend to catch relatively slow-moving insects, with chironomids (non-biting midges) gathered from the water's edge featuring frequently. During the breeding season, they may be able to catch large numbers of the larvae or pupae of various wainscot moths which as caterpillars feed within the reed stems but emerge to pupate. These pale cream caterpillars can sometimes be recognised at long range as the major foods being brought to a nest. Seeds taken in the winter are most commonly those of the common reed *Phragmites australis* but may include other grasses and sedges. Especially in autumn, wandering flocks may be found in beds of common nettle *Urtica dioica* or great willow-herb *Epilobium hirsutum*, taking the seeds; mixed flocks may be with species such as the Redpoll *Carduelis flammea* (Bibby 1974).

Bearded Tit nests are large and rather untidy, built of dry leaves of reed and other grasses. They may be supported on piles of old collapsed reed stems, but tussocky sedges such as greater pond-sedge *Carex riparia* or great fen-sedge *Cladium mariscus* growing under the reeds seem to be preferred. They are easy to pin down from afar, given a good view over the reeds, but can be challenging to find when one is close in under a reed canopy and stepping cautiously through a thick tangle of herbage trying to avoid

damage to the site. The dropping-in place of the adults is invariably a little distance from the actual nest, sometimes as much as 5m.

The essential habitat requirements for breeding are suitable nest sites and feeding places. Nests are likely to be in the drier parts of reed-beds which support the better undercover. They are unlikely to occur in areas which are cut regularly for thatch and have straight clean stems with nothing below. Feeding places are most likely to be wet, especially along margins with open water where emerging chironomids may collect or be drifted by the wind. Some tidal beds on riverine silts may be very productive

238. Adult male Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus* with young in nest, Norfolk, May 1943; note nestlings' conspicuously spotted gapes (*Eric Hosking*)



of insects and also provide good feeding conditions. The tendency for the best feeding and nesting sites to be some way apart means that adults provisioning young may have to travel considerable distances, sometimes several hundred metres. Several pairs may make similar journeys from a suitable nesting area to a particularly rich food source. Good feeding places can shift suddenly from day to day as a change of wind direction or a synchronous emergence of chironomids or wainscot moth larvae suddenly produces rich patches which can vanish almost as fast.

Breeding may begin as early as March (Spitzer 1972 and references therein). Even within Britain, there may be a regular difference of as much as a month between sites. The earlier sites are generally those with wet eutrophic conditions, while breeding in the tidal beds is normally later. These differences undoubtedly reflect differing abundances of food in the spring.

Nests are built by both sexes, though males may take a greater share. There is some 'courtship' feeding. Clutches are relatively large, usually five or six eggs. Incubation and care of the young is shared by both sexes. Breeding is rapid, with a short fledging period and a fast start on another brood. Two broods are regularly reared in a summer, three frequently and four probably not uncommonly. Breeding may continue as late as September. The total number of broods per pair and young reared per season undoubtedly varies between sites and seasons. It is very difficult to study, even with marked birds, because pairs may move some distance between attempts and the action can be so fast that it is difficult to keep pace. My own attempted study of this failed because I was unfortunate to choose a site and year in which the population was smaller than expected and food was scarce, leading to widespread failures from starvation. Nest failures from predation are probably normally low, though flooding can cause major losses. I have, however, watched a nest which produced young in spite of the eggs having been briefly under water during a high tide.

In good circumstances, Bearded Tits may successfully fledge more than ten young per pair in a season, with the most successful pairs perhaps rearing 20. This may be the highest productive rate achieved by any passerine in Europe and clearly represents a fairly extreme life-style. How do they manage it?

To some extent, they live in a suitable habitat for rapid reproduction. The best wetlands are extremely productive, so there is plenty of food. Furthermore, insect abundance in a reed-bed generally rises from April to August (Bibby & Thomas in prep.), unlike that in woodland, for instance, where there may be a rather sharp seasonal peak of abundance of food for most breeding birds. Bearded Tits can therefore produce several large broods in a long season. This is in marked contrast with the most numerous bird in the habitat, the Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*, which, among similarly sized European warblers, has a low reproductive rate but an exceptional longevity. In the jargon (but useful shorthand if understood) of sociology, the Reed Warbler and the Bearded Tit are at opposite ends of the spectrum of K and r selection for life-strategy. This interesting contrast is outside the scope of the present discussion.

Bearded Tits show several adaptations for rapid breeding. Attempts by individual pairs may overlap considerably. In the most extreme cases that I have seen, the young of one brood were still in the nest at nine days old when the first egg of another clutch was laid about 5m away. Nest-building and the feeding of young thus overlapped while the female was simultaneously accumulating reserves for further eggs and feeding her earlier brood. The overlapping of feeding and building is common and, even with marked birds, is exceptionally confusing in the field. If you have a bird nest-building, you do not expect to find that it also has five-day-old young. Some nests give the impression of having been put together in undue haste, and building of the current nest may continue virtually until hatching time. Building can therefore be taking place at almost any stage of the breeding cycle. The young leave the nest before they are able to fly and appear to be independent of their parents at 20-25 days old. All stages of the breeding cycle are thus compressed and there is considerable overlap in the timing of successive broods. The details would repay further study of a marked and carefully observed population.

I suspect that Bearded Tits also maximise their breeding rate by producing young of comparatively low quality. Fresh eggs weigh about



239. Adult female Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus*, with two damselflies, Norfolk, May 1943; note perching position, with feet on separate reed stems (*Eric Hosking*)

2.05g and summer adults about 15.5g. At 13.2% of the female body weight, this is a typically sized egg for a passerine of this size (Lack 1968). The young, however, are rather sparsely feathered (Steiner 1971) and have a complete post-juvenile moult. Late-summer juveniles weigh about 14.0g, with a wide variation, which is light in comparison with the adults. Juvenile Reed Warblers, in contrast, reach adult weight in less than two weeks.

Spitzer (1972) postulated another interesting behaviour related to high reproductive rates, in which early-reared young may themselves breed in August after completing their moult. There is no field evidence for this suggestion apart from the fact that adults are normally moulting at the time of the late breeding attempts. A captive juvenile apparently laid an egg on 21st July after completing an unusually early moult. It would be remarkable if juveniles could be shown to breed in their first autumn. I am not aware of any other temperate-latitude passerine in which juveniles breed at less than six months old; even helping parents to rear their later broods is unusual.

Two studies (Ten Kate 1932; Feindt & Jung 1968) have hinted at polygyny, mainly from evidence of unusually large clutches. It is suggested that these result from two females laying in the same nest. The latter authors also reported a case of a male simultaneously feeding two nests of young about 100m apart. I rather doubt if the Bearded Tit will prove to be regularly polygynous. It is quite the wrong sort of bird. With no defence of food resources or potential nesting places, there is no obvious way for an already mated male to be a better prospect for a female than one who is not mated. The sex ratio is approximately equal, though in small populations there could easily chance to be one or two more females than males. The breeding system is such that males are fully involved, whereas in polygynous species the female has to be able to breed with limited or no assistance from the male. Probably as a consequence of the lack of territoriality and shared sex roles in nesting duties, there is very little sexual dimorphism in body size.

A third possible peculiarity is that Bearded Tits show co-operative breeding. Koenig (1951) reported occasional assistance from a second female in feeding young. Feindt & Jung (1968) observed this regularly, but ascribed it to polygyny with a single nest. They did, however, admit that conclusive evidence would be difficult to acquire. In my limited study, nest visiting by different adults of both sexes and juveniles was frequent, and I never saw it resisted. Nor, though, did I see any of these birds feed the young. We have a bird, therefore, which may show any one of three unusual systems: precocious breeding, or co-operative breeding, or polygyny. The evidence so far is simply insufficient.

From as early as May, parties of juveniles have often gathered in flocks in rich feeding grounds such as along the water's edge, and by mid July the oldest will have started a complete post-juvenile moult. The European passerines which undergo such a moult are a curious collection (Ginn & Melville 1983). The main thing that they appear to have in common is an evolutionary origin in more tropical areas where complete post-juvenile moult appears to be frequent (Fogden 1972). Several studies of the Bearded



240. Two male Bearded Tits *Panurus biarmicus*, Norfolk, September 1978 (J. D. Bakewell)



241. Adult female Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus*, German Federal Republic, May 1965 (Manfred Temme)

Tit moult (Baker *et al.* 1975; Hereward 1976; Spitzer 1972; Pearson 1975) have estimated the duration at about 55-65 days. Later-reared young start at a younger age, which can be recognised by eye-colour (Pearson 1975), and moult rather faster, the quickest perhaps taking as little as 40 days to complete by about mid October. These moult rates are more of the speed found in migratory rather than sedentary passerines; the Long-tailed Tit for instance takes about 80 days (Ginn & Melville 1983).

After completion of the moult, Bearded Tits may begin to show high group flying and emigration in the morning on still autumn days. This behaviour was described in detail by Axell (1966), who recorded that it started on a large and regular scale in 1959, which was a fine summer with high breeding success after a run of years with a steady rise of the British population. Irruptive behaviour is now of regular occurrence at many sites in Britain. Evidence for movements in the previous 150 years was only on a relatively small scale (Axell 1966). It apparently started in the Netherlands in 1965. In this year, the population on the Oost Flevoland polder which was colonised shortly before 1960 had reached an estimated 20,000 individuals. Several thousand were ringed, and produced seven controls in Britain (Hudson 1967): the first direct evidence of overseas movements. A Bearded Tit ringed in Britain in October 1965 returned to the Netherlands, and subsequent ringing evidence has suggested that movements may often be two-way migrations (see Axell 1966; Ball & Smith 1976; Reports on Bird Ringing for 1965 onwards).

Several authors have ascribed these irruptions to population pressures. Autumn numbers of Bearded Tits can indeed be very high after a good breeding season. Whilst high numbers undoubtedly contribute, I agree with Spitzer (1974) that the Bearded Tit's dependence on the seed of a single plant is more likely to be responsible. In a year of poor seed production, irrespective of their population levels, the birds will find themselves without a winter food supply and so must move in advance of starvation. The classic irruptive species, such as the Nutcracker *Nucifraga caryocatactes*, crossbills *Loxia*, the Redpoll and the Siskin *Carduelis spinus*, are also highly dependent on the seeds of single species of plants (Svardson 1957). The reed is a plant whose normal propagation is vegetative, and, in established reed-beds, individual plants (clones) may live for hundreds of years. Reproduction by seed is probably not a major goal in the plant's life strategy and clones are known to be very variable in their seed production (Haslam 1973). There is also considerable annual variation (Haslam 1972). It would be interesting to know the extent to which reed-beds differ in their seed production and thus ability to support high winter numbers and probably better survival of Bearded Tits. The reed-beds of the Dutch polders produced enormous numbers of Bearded Tits and probably contributed to their recent increase in numbers throughout western Europe. Large areas were artificially established from seed, so would have been seed-producing strains of reed. I wonder if this was partly responsible for their favourability to the Bearded Tit? If I am correct that irruptions are more related to seed abundance than to the birds' population levels, then they would not have started suddenly in 1959 as recorded by Axell. I suggest that they did not become obvious until they involved large numbers of birds, but occurred nonetheless. To my mind, Axell (1966) found a lot of old records, considering the scarcity of Bearded Tits and of ornithologists prior to the middle of this century. The Bearded Tit was recognised as being nomadic and migratory in Russia before these aspects received much attention in Europe (Dementiev & Gladkov 1968).

A feature of Bearded Tit movements is the species' tendency to travel in pairs. A male and female caught in Flintshire in October 1965 bore consecutively numbered Dutch rings (Hudson 1967). I caught a similar pair of consecutively ringed Dutch birds from a flock of only five at Grafham Water, Cambridgeshire, in January 1973. This topic was reviewed by van den Elzen (1977b) who gave abundant evidence that the phenomenon is frequent. This, coupled with their tendency to travel in flocks, may be an adaptation for colonising new sites which may be remote and isolated from one another in a desert of unsuitable landscapes. It may also mean that no time need be devoted to pair formation in early spring, so that breeding can begin without delay.

Wintering areas are generally in reeds, but habitat selection is more catholic than in the summer. Some breeding sites, such as Murston in Kent (Ball & Smith 1976), are virtually deserted. Numbers may be substantially reduced in severe winters, but reed panicles are likely to be inaccessible only if glazed with frost or collapsed under exceptional snowfalls. Bearded Tits are not primarily dependent on insects in the winter, so do not



242. Adult male and female Bearded Tits *Panurus biarmicus*, Netherlands, September 1972
(P. Munsterman)

compete with Wrens *Troglodytes troglodytes* and Blue Tits *Parus caeruleus*, which may move into the reeds in large numbers. Blue Tits can extract overwintering insects from the stems of reeds, particularly gall-flies of the family Cecidomyiidae. The crunching of fly-infested reed stems by Blue Tits is a characteristic winter sound of a reed-bed, but Bearded Tits lack the bill power to do this. They do, however, pick over cut stems for overwintering insects, and often follow reed harvesters closely. Grieve (1977) was able to feed Bearded Tits with a seed mixture during severe weather, so their winter survival might be enhanced on nature reserves by feeding during unusually harsh conditions.

Although it is still a scarce bird in Britain, the Bearded Tit is not much of

a problem to nature conservation. Much of its population is now on nature reserves, and, if these are managed to maintain their reeds, they will maintain their Bearded Tits. The population is more widespread than previously, so is less susceptible to reduction by hard winters than when they were confined to chilly East Anglia. The huge numbers in the Flevoland polders were a transient phenomenon, but such large beds may again be created by coastal engineering works. The other very large population, at Lake Tåkern, may be reduced if large-scale commercial harvesting of reeds develops (Bjorkman & Tyrberg 1982). In general, though, reed harvesting and Bearded Tits are not incompatible, and the demand for thatch is a valuable commercial incentive for the maintenance of reed-beds (Bibby & Lunn 1982).

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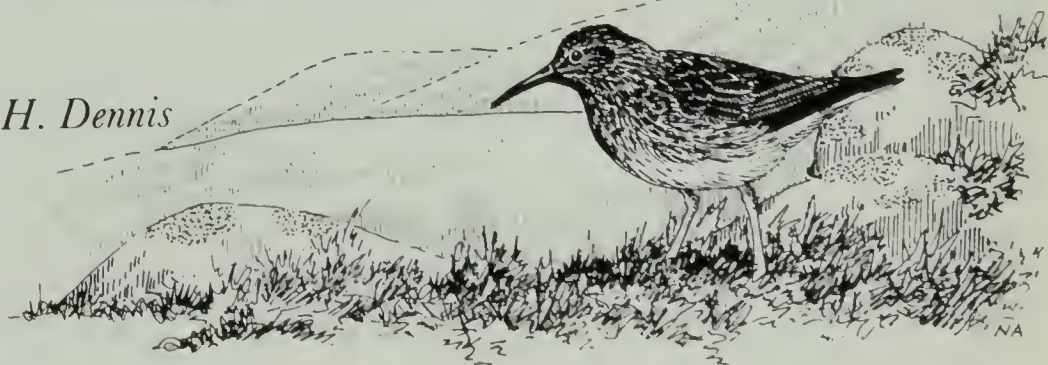
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Purple Sandpipers breeding in Scotland

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Purple Sandpipers *Calidris maritima* were first recorded breeding in Scotland in 1978. Brief details of that event and subsequent breeding at the same locality have appeared in the annual Scottish Bird Reports and

in the reports of the Rare Breeding Birds Panel (*Brit. Birds* 73: 18; 75: 168; 76: 15). In the interests of the birds, fuller details were suppressed. This paper now draws together observations for the six years 1978-83, including reports submitted to the Scottish Bird Report and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel. It appears under my name in an attempt to continue to safeguard the Purple Sandpipers' attempt to colonise Scotland. For this reason, individual observers' names and the locality are not disclosed. Due to possible adverse effects, including inadvertently helping avian and mammal predators to locate nests, local ornithologists decided not to search for nests and eggs, but to rely on seeing young to prove breeding. I am grateful to all of the observers who sent in records; I should welcome unpublished observations which add to the following account.

The Purple Sandpiper is a common visitor to the rocky shores of Scotland. The first adults arrive in July and the last usually emigrate in mid to late May, although occasional ones may oversummer on the coasts. In view of the colonisation of Scotland in recent years by other Scandinavian species, such as Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*, Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii* and Lapland Bunting *Calcarius lapponicus*, it is likely that the Purple Sandpipers also originated from Scandinavia, rather than from the Faeroe Islands, where the species is reported as declining (*Brit. Birds* 72: 277, 591). The habitat was arctic-alpine heath similar to the tundra slopes and plateaux used by nesting Purple Sandpipers in Scandinavia. The short vegetation was dominated by sedges, mosses and lichens, interspersed with rocks, screes and gravel.

History of colonisation of Scotland, 1978-83

The first observation was on 3rd June 1978, when a pair of Purple Sandpipers was found in suitable nesting habitat. It was a fine, sunny day, and one bird occasionally displayed by raising and flapping its wings while calling to the other bird. The birds were very tame and walked within 1.5 m of the observer as they fed on insects from the ground. He told me that evening of his find; we decided to keep the matter confidential, and to return later to see if they had bred. Surprisingly, this was the first record of this species in suitable nesting habitat in Scotland, despite the fact that it was a likely colonist from Scandinavia. It was also the only species to nest in the Faeroe Islands and not in Britain and Ireland.

On 20th June 1978, one adult was seen in the same general area, and on 26th the other adult (with more yellow at the base of the bill) was observed. On 8th July 1978, an adult performed a rodent-run display in the same area, and then returned to brood three newly hatched chicks. One adult was seen with at least one chick on 23rd July, while a second adult was found 750 m away. On 29th July one chick was just able to fly. Thus, in the first year, one pair hatched three young and at least one young fledged. Subsequent observations have revealed the difficulty of locating all chicks of a brood, especially as they get older.

In 1979, the first adult was seen on 24th May (in the following paragraphs only significant dates and sightings are given). On 19th June, a nest containing three eggs was found and the following day the observers

recorded a change-over of adults at the nest. On 4th July, two chicks about two or three days old were seen with a parent; one of these chicks was nearly flying on 25th July. On this date, another adult was found 500m away with at least one chick, about seven days old; these birds were relocated on 9th August, along with a second chick, but no Purple Sandpipers were found at the first location. One of the later brood was just able to fly on 10th August.

In 1980, an adult was giving distraction display on 16th July in the same general area, and a chick was seen on 21st and 24th July. On 19th July, however, an adult was observed about 1km away, near the 1979 nest site, with a chick just able to fly. The last sighting was of an adult on 2nd August and a juvenile by itself some distance away.

The first pair in 1981 was seen displaying on 18th May and rodent-running distraction display was noted from 21st June. On 28th June, three separate adults were found, each with two young (about ten days old, five to seven days old and about five days old), while, in a fourth area, two adults and a nest containing three eggs were reported. Fledging success for the three broods was not obtained. The nest contained one newly hatched chick and two addled eggs on 19th July.

In 1982, an agitated pair was present on 1st June; presumably, there was a nest nearby containing eggs. In the same general area, a pair was observed displaying on 23rd June, while on 2nd July an adult was looking after at least one two- or three-day-old chick. The last record was of an adult and juvenile on 21st July.

Other observations at Scottish nesting grounds

The earliest recorded dates have been 13th May 1983 (one), 18th May 1981 (a pair) and 24th May 1979 (one), but these refer to chance sightings rather than careful searching for spring arrivals. Display has been noted between 18th May and 23rd June: principally one bird raising and fluttering wings on the ground and calling to the other bird, although on 26th May 1981 a singing bird was heard calling in song-flight over the nesting grounds. These observations follow the pattern recorded in *BIWP*. Two clutches of three eggs have been reported by visitors (they hatched on about 2nd July 1979 and 19th July 1981). The eggs and nests were normal for Purple Sandpiper, and both sexes have been recorded incubating at the start of incubation. Extrapolation of egg-laying dates based on 21-22 days (*BIWP*) gave the earliest full clutch as 29th May, with four clutches completed during 1st-7th June, one clutch during 8th-14th June, two clutches during 15th-21st June and two clutches in the last week of June. *BIWP* states that the fledging period is not recorded; we have two records relating to fledging, one for 21 days and one for 23 days. The young are tended by one adult, which seems to leave very soon after the young fledge. The juveniles appear to depart within two weeks of fledging. We have no evidence of flocking prior to departure.

Discussion

We have found some difficulty in finding enough pairs of birds for the number of subsequent broods. For example, in 1981, when three broods and a clutch of eggs were recorded on 28th June, the maximum number of

adults located was five. Although it is difficult to find Purple Sandpipers, we wonder if polygamy has occurred. Broods have been as close as 500m apart, and, in the year of greatest density, the four broods were in an area of about 250 ha. Injury-feigning adults have led people up to 300m before flying off and returning at low level to the original area. The latest record (adult and young) was on 10th August 1979. The only records in suitable nesting habitat away from this locality are of remains found in two Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* eyries (K. Brockie *in litt.*).

The conservation needs for this species were examined, but it was decided that, as suitable nesting habitat for this species is plentiful in Scotland, the success of the attempted colonisation was most dependent on climatic conditions. Nevertheless, undue attention from egg-collectors or unnecessary disturbance from birdwatchers may adversely influence breeding success; for this reason, we appeal for confidentiality and for the nesting birds not to be disturbed unnecessarily. The species is now on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and it is hoped that Purple Sandpipers become established as regular breeders in the United Kingdom.

Summary

Purple Sandpipers *Calidris maritima* were found nesting for the first time in Scotland in 1978 and bred for five consecutive years at the same locality. The best year was 1981, when four broods were located. The colonisation follows the trend of other Fenno-Scandinavian species beginning to breed in Scotland. The following table summarises annual breeding success:

1978	One brood, three young hatched, at least one fledged
1979	Two broods; at least one of each fledged
1980	Two broods; at least one of each fledged
1981	Four broods (at least two young in each of three broods, only one in fourth)
1982	One brood fledged one chick; possibly one other attempt
1983	At least one adult present, but breeding not proved

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European news

Records have been supplied by correspondents in 17 countries for the fourteenth six-monthly report on interesting occurrences and status changes in Europe. This feature is intended as a news service; anyone requiring further information or quoting records in other publications should refer to the literature of the relevant country. Records awaiting formal verification by national rarity committees are indicated by an asterisk(*).

Unless otherwise stated, all records refer to single individuals

White-billed Diver <i>Gavia adamsii</i> GERMAN FEDERAL REPUBLIC Third and fourth Bavarian records: 18th-20th January 1972, and 22nd December 1979 to 13th January	1980, POLAND Fifth record: dead at Jastarnia on 28th November 1982.
Pintado Petrel <i>Daption capense</i> FRANCE First 20th-century record: dead on beach in	

Brittany in February 1983*, 'seems dubious'.

Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* POLAND Second record: five adults at Swibno during 5th-8th September 1982 (first record was of two in February 1979; *Brit. Birds* 75: 25).

Pygmy Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmeus* HUNGARY Ipolyszög on 6th November 1982.

White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus* LATVIAN SSR Fourth or fifth record: summer 1983, but probably an escape.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* HUNGARY Fertő Lake on 28th July 1982 and 11th August 1982.

Western Reef Heron *Egretta gularis* FRANCE Third individual, in Camargue, in October-November 1982* (cf. *Brit. Birds* 76: 272).

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* FINLAND Fourth record: Uusikaarlepyy during 8th to about 12th May 1983 (first was in 1977). LATVIAN SSR Fourth record, and first in 20th Century: May 1983. NORWAY Fourth to sixth records: two in May 1981 and one in July 1981.

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis* DENMARK Highest-ever total: 1,870 in February 1983.

Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis* ESTONIAN SSR Third breeding record: pair laid five eggs and hatched four young at same site as in 1981 and 1982 (*Brit. Birds* 75: 569; 76: 273); another pair in same region on 7th July 1983.

Brent Goose *Branta bernicla* FINLAND First record of *B. b. nigricans*: Virolahti on 22nd May 1982, migrating ENE with *B. b. bernicla*.

Baikal Teal *Anas formosa* FRANCE Eighth record: Charente-Maritime on 26th March 1983*.

Garganey *Anas querquedula* DENMARK Highest spring number for many years: 43 at Vejlerne, North Jutland, on 29th April 1983.

Shoveler *Anas clypeata* FAEROE ISLANDS Third record: Tórshavn on September 1982.

Pochard *Aythya ferina* FAEROE ISLANDS Fourth record: male at Tórshavn on 29th November 1982.

Eider *Somateria mollissima* DENMARK Highest-ever passage number: 65,000 at Ulvsund, Møn, on 4th April 1983.

Spectacled Eider *Somateria fischeri* GERMAN FEDERAL REPUBLIC Male at Nordemole, Travemünde, Schleswig-Holstein, during 3rd-5th February 1982.

Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis* FINLAND Correction: good migration day, 8th October 1982 (*Brit. Birds* 76: 273), was best in autumn; best days in spring produce 200,000-300,000 annually.

Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata* NETHERLANDS Fifth record: Eemshaven, Groningen, during 20th November to 3rd December 1982 (fourth, in April 1982, was the first since 1966; *Brit. Birds* 75: 569).

White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* HUNGARY Palić Lake on 1st December 1982. SWITZERLAND Female near Verbois during 8th-16th January 1983, and near Geneva on 17th January 1983.

Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus* FRANCE One in southwest in July 1983 (first and second 20th-Century records were in 1973 and 1979; *Brit. Birds* 75: 269).

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* SWITZERLAND Unusual number: 60 at Benken/Tuggen on 14th June 1983.

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus* SWITZERLAND St Martin-Héremence on 26th-27th April 1983*.

Levant Sparrowhawk *Accipiter brevipes* HUNGARY Budakeszi on 9th November 1977 and adult male at Hegykő on 25th November 1982.

Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus* HUNGARY Hortobágy on 11th April 1982 and Tisza-füred on 6th July 1982.

Booted Eagle *Hieraetus pennatus* LATVIAN SSR First record: summer 1983.

Bonelli's Eagle *Hieraetus fasciatus* LATVIAN SSR First record: spring 1983.

Hobby *Falco subbuteo* FAEROE ISLANDS First record: Nólsoy on 24th July 1982.

Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* DENMARK Highest passage total for many years: 21 at Skagen, North Jutland (previous recent best was 13 in 1973).

Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix* DENMARK Scarcer in 1982 than in 1981: CBC results showed 81% decrease.

Quail *Coturnix coturnix* FAEROE ISLANDS First since 1960: Mykines during 4th-14th July 1982 (cf. influx noted in Denmark in June 1982; *Brit. Birds* 75: 570).

Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla* FINLAND Second record: Parikkala during June-July 1983.

Corncrake *Crex crex* BELGIUM Highest number of singing males since 1966: in south and east, probably 'several tens'.

Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* DENMARK Commoner in 1982 than in 1981: CBC results showed 70% increase.

Crane *Grus grus* FAEROE ISLANDS First adults: pair dancing at Kollafjörður on 19th April

1983. FINLAND Correction: high numbers (Brit. Birds 76: 274) were in 1981, not 1982.

Demoiselle Crane *Anthropoides virgo* FRANCE Sixth record: immature at Hyères salt-marshes, Var, on 18th April 1983*, the most likely of the six to be a genuine vagrant (fourth and fifth were in November 1977 and November 1978: *Alauda* 47: 35).

Little Bustard *Tetrax tetrax* FINLAND Tenth record: near Helsinki on 6th May 1983 (previous records were in 1912, 1977 and 1979). NETHERLANDS Sixteenth record, and first since 1959: Lage Zwaluwe, Noord-Brabant, during 19th February to 8th March 1983.

Sociable Plover *Chettusia gregaria* YUGOSLAVIA Second record: Ljubljana Moor on 2nd April 1983 (first was in 1967).

Little Stint *Calidris minuta* FAEROE ISLANDS Third record: Mykines on 2nd June 1982.

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis* NORWAY Second record: Vardø, Finnmark, on 6th June 1980 (note that this is summer record, cf. first Danish record on 17th July 1978, first Swedish record on 8th August 1978, and first and second Finnish records on 9th August 1980 and in mid May 1982: *Brit. Birds* 72: 277, 591; 74: 261; 75: 570).

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima* LATVIAN SSR Second record: February 1983.

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* FAEROE ISLANDS First record: Sandoy on 14th June 1982.

Stilt Sandpiper *Micropalama himantopus* FINLAND First record: Kotka during 20th-22nd June 1983.

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* NETHERLANDS Second record: trapped at Holwerd, Friesland, on 18th May 1983* (first was on 4th September 1971).

Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* FAEROE ISLANDS First summer record: Tórshavn on 10th July 1983.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* FAEROE ISLANDS First since 1972: Saksun on 12th May 1983.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* FRANCE 'More and more regular on Atlantic coast'.

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* LATVIAN SSR Fourth record: Riga in May 1982.

Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius* MALTA Third record: spring 1983 (previous two in winter).

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus* YUGOSLAVIA Fourth record for Slovenia:

light-phase near Ptuj on 14th August 1983 (previous ones in 1879, 1892 and 1916).

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus* FRANCE Highest breeding numbers: 13 pairs in Camargue in 1982; also up to 51, mostly first-summers, summering near Charente-Maritime coasts.

Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* NORWAY Third record: adult at Mølen, Vestfold, on 16th November 1980 (previous records involved two in June 1979 and one in December 1979: *Brit. Birds* 75: 27).

Slender-billed Gull *Larus genei* FRANCE Breeding: 26 pairs attempted in Camargue in 1982.

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* GERMAN FEDERAL REPUBLIC Second German record: Sylt, Schleswig-Holstein, on 1st August 1982.

Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides* DENMARK Unusually high winter numbers: up to five per day at Skagen, North Jutland, in 1982/83. FRANCE First 20th-Century influx: five to eight from Seine Estuary to Vendée (one inland near Paris) in January-February 1983 (last one on 1st May 1983).

Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus* DENMARK Unusually high winter numbers: up to 11 per day at Skagen, North Jutland, in 1982/83.

Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea* NORWAY Fifth record: adult at Sklinna, Nord-Trøndelag, on 21st May 1981 (first Swedish record was in June 1981: *Brit. Birds* 75: 27).

Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis* FRANCE One in colony of Sandwich Terns *S. sandvicensis* at Arcachon in spring 1983 assumed to be the same bird as present in summer since 1974.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus* SWITZERLAND 'Exceptionally marked passage' in spring 1983.

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* FRANCE Probably largest-ever party: flock of 60 at Lac de Mison, at height of 635 m in Alps, on 25th September 1981.

Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* NORWAY First record: Mølen, Vestfold, on 3rd August 1974.

Little Auk *Alle alle* POLAND Fifth record: female dead near Gdansk on 25th October 1982.

Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius* GERMAN FEDERAL REPUBLIC Probably first record: near Maulbronn, North Württemberg, during about 25th May to about 22nd June 1982.

Little Owl *Athene noctua* FINLAND Second

record: caught at Tauro bird-station near Oulu on 26th May 1983 (first was in 1901).

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* BELGIUM First proved breeding for 16 years: several cases of confirmed and probable breeding in 1983*. MALTA First nesting since 1909: nest with five eggs on Comino in spring 1983, failed due to human interference.

Egyptian Nightjar *Caprimulgus aegyptius* DENMARK First record: caught at Christiansø in 1983* (only other recent records were in Malta in 1973 and 1978: *Brit. Birds* 71: 584).

Alpine Swift *Apus melba* POLAND First record: three at Zakopane in Tatra Mountains on 10th August 1982.

Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* NETHERLANDS Breeding: nesting at Texel, Noord-Holland, in 1983* (only two previous breeding records were in 1964 and 1965) (cf. breeding in north and northwest France during 1980-82: *Brit. Birds* 75: 28, 571; 76: 274-275). NORWAY Eleventh record: Sem, Vestfold, on 27th October 1981.

Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* GERMAN FEDERAL REPUBLIC First modern west Bavarian breeding records: Oberallgäu in 1981 and 1982 (cf. first 20th-Century nesting in Jura in Switzerland in 1980: *Brit. Birds* 73: 576).

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* GERMAN FEDERAL REPUBLIC Second or third Bavarian record: 26th April 1981 (increasing northwards vagrancy since 1950s is well documented).

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis* FAEROE ISLANDS Second record: 20-30 at Sumba during 20th September to 10th October 1982; 'possibly overlooked previously'.

Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus* FAEROE ISLANDS First record: Sumba on 10th October 1982.

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica* FAEROE ISLANDS Second record: two to four at Akraberg and Sumba during 20th-23rd September 1982.

White-throated Robin *Irania gutturalis* NORWAY First record: male at Odda, Hordaland, on 15th May 1981 (cf. third Swedish record, a singing male in June 1981: *Brit. Birds* 75: 28; and male reported from the Calf of Man, Britain, in June 1983: *Brit. Birds* 76: 420).

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* DENMARK Commoner in 1982 than in 1981: CBC results showed 64% increase.

Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus* FAEROE ISLANDS Second breeding record: 1982 (first was in 1981).

Eye-browed Thrush *Turdus obscurus* NORWAY Third record: juvenile male at Utsira, Rogaland, on 3rd October 1981 (second was in December 1978: *Brit. Birds* 73: 259-260).

River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis* DENMARK Highest ever total: about ten at end of May 1983* (usually only one or two).

Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola* NORWAY Third record: juvenile at Årstad, Rogaland, on 18th September 1980 (second was in June 1977: *Brit. Birds* 75: 28).

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* DENMARK Much commoner in 1982 than in 1981: CBC results showed 106% increase.

Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta* BELGIUM Rapid expansion in southeast: 'probably several tens' of breeding pairs in 1983* (first proved breeding was as recent as 1981: *Brit. Birds* 75: 29).

Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata* MALTA No recovery by spring 1983 from drastic decline in 1981.

Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans* NETHERLANDS Influx: six during 25th April to 7th June 1983* (grand total of only six previously). SWITZERLAND First record from Geneva area: male near Prévessin on 30th May 1983.

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala* NETHERLANDS Second record: male at Eemshaven, Groningen, on 13th May 1983* (first was during December 1980 to February 1981: *Brit. Birds* 75: 271). NORWAY First record: adult male at Store Faerder, Vestfold, on 26th July 1981 (first Danish and Swedish records were in June 1978 and May-June 1980: *Brit. Birds* 71: 586; 75: 29).

Pallas's Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus* NETHERLANDS Six during 9th October to 14th November 1982, compared with grand total of only 13 previously (cf. about 16 in Denmark, 45 in Finland and about 130 in Britain in autumn 1982: *Brit. Birds* 76: 275, 516-517).

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus* DENMARK Highest ever spring passage at Christiansø: 800-1,000 on 1st April 1983.

Semi-collared Flycatcher *Ficedula semitorquata* MALTA Sixth record: September 1982 (previous five all in 1976).

Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis* DENMARK Highest ever total: six in spring 1983* (usually only one or two a year).

Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus* DENMARK Not quite extinct (contra *Brit. Birds* 76: 276):

three individuals in North Jutland in spring 1983.

Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla* DENMARK Expanding: first record in northern East Jutland, and several new locations in Zealand and Lolland.

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* GERMAN FEDERAL REPUBLIC Breeding: 'Further spread and increase in Lower Saxony' (cf. recent increases in Finland, France, the Netherlands and Sweden: *Brit. Birds* 75: 573).

Rose-coloured Starling *Sturnus roseus* HUNGARY 18-20 at Alpár on 26th May 1983. YUGOSLAVIA Sixth record for Slovenia: three with Starlings *S. vulgaris* in Ljubljana in May 1983 (previous ones in 1901, 1907 and 1960).

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla* YUGOSLAVIA First breeding-season record: male and female near Idrija in July 1983.

Linnet *Carduelis cannabina* FAEROE ISLANDS Second record: Akraberg on 11th October 1982 (first involved a pair in May 1980: *Brit. Birds* 73: 578).

Redpoll *Carduelis flammea* GERMAN FEDERAL REPUBLIC First breeding in Hesse: Fulda in 1982 (cf. range expansion in Czechoslovakia, Belgium, Denmark and Finland: *Brit. Birds* 70: 219, 496; 72: 280, 592).

Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra* BELGIUM Highest number since 1975: large influx from June 1983. FRANCE Influx: extending from Belgium border to Pyrénées and Atlantic coast from June 1983.

Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus* DENMARK The 1982 irruption (*Brit. Birds* 76: 276) still noticeable in early 1983: 610 at Skagen, North Jutland, on 23rd February 1983 (cf. British records: *Brit. Birds* 76: 522-523).

Scarlet Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* CZECHOSLOVAKIA Breeding: greatly increasing, with one to five pairs at most localities, but sometimes up to 30 pairs; bred in Slovakia since 1959, in Moravia since 1962 and in Bohemia since 1968 (cf. range expansions in seven other European countries: *Brit. Birds* 76: 118-123, 276). FAEROE ISLANDS Second and third records: singly at Sumba on 24th and 30th September 1982. GERMAN FEDERAL REPUBLIC First record in Hesse since

1953: summering males in Marburg/Lahn in 1981 and 1982.

Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis* FAEROE ISLANDS Breeding: only one pair in 1983.

Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos* MALTA First and second records: singles in autumn 1982. NETHERLANDS Twentieth record: trapped at Bloemendaal, Noord-Holland, on 22nd October 1981 (previous records almost all in October-November).

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella* FAEROE ISLANDS First since 1972: male at Tórshavn on 14th April 1983.

Girl Bunting *Emberiza cirrus* POLAND Fourth record: two males and one female on 25th September 1982 and one male and one female on 31st October 1982 at Bystrzyca Kłodzka, Silesia (third was in 1981: *Brit. Birds* 75: 573).

Rock Bunting *Emberiza cia* POLAND Second record: adult female at Krapkowice, Silesia, on 29th September 1982.

Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana* FAEROE ISLANDS Fourth record: Akraberg on 20th September 1982.

Cretzschmar's Bunting *Emberiza caesia* POLAND First record: five in Tatra Mountains on 22nd August 1982.

Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica* ESTONIAN SSR Ninth and tenth records: three singing males at Laeva on 14th May 1983, and singing male at Vetla on 15th June 1983. POLAND Three on Baltic coast: immature female on 31st August 1981, female or immature on 17th September 1981, and immature male on 22nd October 1982.

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla* FAEROE ISLANDS First record: Akraberg on 10th-11th September 1982.

Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola* NETHERLANDS Fifth record: trapped at Schouwen, Zeeland, on 5th September 1981 (third and fourth were in 1977 and 1978).

Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala* FINLAND Third record: Lågskär bird-station on 30th May 1983* (previous ones were in 1980 and 1982: *Brit. Birds* 75: 573).

Dickcissel *Spiza americana* NORWAY First record: adult male at Maløy, Sogn og Fjordane, on 29th July 1981.

CORRECTION We apologise for attributing all Latvian SSR records to the Lithuanian SSR in the last 'European news' (*Brit. Birds* 76: 272-277).

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- No information was supplied from Albania, Bulgaria, German Democratic Republic, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Luxemburg, Portugal, Romania, Spain or Sweden.

Mystery photographs

84 A seething mass of Swifts *Apus apus* is sweeping and swirling low over the waters of an inland lake in June. Suddenly we catch a flash of white on the rump of one of them as it banks before us, and we gaze in dismay as it disappears into the distance. Clearly a swift, the all-dark plumage and long, narrow wings prove it's nothing else, but one with a white rump-patch leaves us with no less than four possibilities on the West Palearctic list.



If the observation is a quick fly-past view, then there is probably little more to be done. An observer in Britain would be lucky enough to see a swift with a white rump, and luckier still to get a prolonged view; the latter, accompanied by excellent light conditions, is needed to identify specifically a white-rumped swift with a forked tail. For the moment, we must concentrate on the photographs, which, although poor, freeze the bird for critical observation.

The deeply forked tail alone clearly shows that it is not a Little Swift *A. affinis*, which at most has a slight notch on a tightly closed tail, and usually shows a square tail and a square white rump-band. In field guides covering the West Palearctic region, we find White-rumped Swift *A. caffer*, an African species with a tenuous population in southern Spain and Morocco. This is a small species, with a narrow white rump-band and a deeply forked tail, which appears narrowly pointed when closed. A diagnostic feature of *caffer*, which shows in photographs, but is difficult to see in the field, is the narrowly pointed outermost tail feather, making the tail corners appear very fine (*Brit. Birds* 62: plate 24); this does not, however, fit our mystery bird, which also has, perhaps, too broad a rump-band for *caffer*.

The other two possibilities are Pacific Swift *A. pacificus*, a vagrant from the Eastern Palearctic, and an aberrant common Swift. Partial albino individuals of the latter occur occasionally: these can suggest Alpine Swift *A. melba*, as well as any of the white-rumped species (*Brit. Birds* 63: 384-385; 71: 222-223). It is difficult to decide from the photographs which of these remaining two options is the solution to our problem. The upperside view in particular, however, shows that the mystery bird appears rather too streamlined for Swift: it shows more body/tail beyond the wings and the head appears to be small. The mystery bird is in fact a Pacific Swift, which I photographed in Mongolia in June 1981.

Pacific Swifts of the highly migratory northern populations are roughly the same size as Swift, but appear rather slimmer in the body, especially so about the rear end, and the wings are also narrower, appearing more slender, but direct comparison is really needed to confirm these features. Under optimum viewing conditions, the general appearance is of a dark,

243. Mystery photograph 85. Identify the species. Answer next month



rather uniform, greyish-brown swift, with its only contrast being blacker tail and tail-coverts, separated from the rest of the plumage by a white horseshoe-shaped rump-band, hardly extending onto the sides of the body (though perhaps it does so a little more than on *caffer*). Under prolonged close views in good light, the entire underparts are finely scaled by paler feather fringes, giving almost a mealy look to the head and resulting in relatively little contrast with the slightly paler throat. White-rumped Swift would show a more extensive and contrasting white throat and has glossy black body plumage, not dull brown like that of Pacific Swift.

Pacific Swift, now on the British and Irish list (*Brit. Birds* 76: 503), is the newly coined name suggested by the BOU; it clearly reminds us of its scientific name and is far less of a mouthful—and less ambiguous and confusing—than the plethora of English names that the species has collected over the years (e.g. White-rumped Swift, Blyth's White-rumped Swift, Large White-rumped Swift, Asian White-rumped Swift, and Fork-tailed Swift).

S. C. MADGE

Notes

Apparent feeding association between Gannet and Cory's Shearwater

On 1st November 1980, at Torremolinos, Spain, we were separately watching up to five first- and second-year Gannets *Sula bassana* feeding about 500-800m offshore, and were attracted by the behaviour of up to ten Cory's Shearwaters *Calonectris diomedea* near them. It soon became obvious to us that the shallow plunging of the Gannets from heights of up to 10m attracted the attention of the shearwaters, for, as soon as a Gannet hit the water, between two and five Cory's would immediately fly to the spot from where they had been resting on the water and, in some cases, wait for the Gannet to surface. Neither of us noted any plunging by the shearwaters, although they certainly splashed down heavily at times in the haste to be close to the Gannet as it surfaced. The range was too great to note if the shearwaters robbed the Gannets, or if the latter were feeding successfully. Eventually, the Gannets left the area, leaving the shearwaters resting on the sea in the same general location. Cory's Shearwaters normally feed on cephalopods (squid species), usually caught at night, either by skimming the water or by direct surface-feeding; shallow surface-plunging has also been noted (*BWP* 1), as has close proximity to whales, when the shearwaters are presumed to be taking the remains of prey.

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Dr K. E. L. Simmons has commented that the Cory's Shearwaters' behaviour reminds him vividly of that of Brown Boobies *S. leucogaster* inshore at Ascension when depth-diving Masked Boobies *S. dactylatra* were fishing. EDS

Greater Sand Plover in Humberside At about 10.00 GMT on 29th July 1981, Mrs J. Thompson, E. Crawford and J. Rose found a pale medium-sized *Charadrius* plover feeding on the Humber mudflats opposite the Crown & Anchor in Kilnsea, Humberside. From what they saw of it, they suspected that it was a Greater Sand Plover *C. leschenaultii*, so left the bird still feeding there, and continued on to Spurn, where they contacted BRS and told him of what they had seen. BRS immediately went to look for it, and eventually found it feeding in the same general area as it had first been seen. At this stage it was some 40m out on the mud flats, but it moved farther out (up to 100m) during the course of the day. After taking notes, BRS left the area, but a number of other observers who had also arrived during the morning remained watching it for much of the rest of the day. These observers reported that, as the tide rose during the late afternoon, it flew off south towards Spurn Point. So, at 19.00 BRS and R.P. Council decided to check Chalk Bank, an area favoured by roosting waders on the Humber shore about 3km south of the main entrance gate to Spurn Nature Reserve. On the way down, they stopped at a point which was roughly half-way, to check the Humber shore. From there, BRS spotted a medium-sized pale wader on the Humber shore some 350m to the north. Almost as he spotted it, the bird got up, flew towards the observers, and landed on the shore some 20m away. There, it was immediately attacked by a Ringed Plover *C. hiaticula*, which had a brood of small chicks, and chased off. It flew off low southwards and was located shortly afterwards at Chalk Bank. During the next few days, the pattern of its behaviour remained much the same: roosting at high tide at Chalk Bank, and then feeding on the mud flats opposite the Crown & Anchor. During the latter half of its stay, however, this pattern changed, and it could be seen only around high tide at Chalk Bank, and was presumed to be feeding far out on the mud flats, possibly off Chalk Bank, during the rest of the time. In fact, for the last two days, it was even missing from Chalk Bank for an hour either side of high tide, and it is not clear whether it roosted on the seashore farther south then, or went over to South Humberside for that period, as do many other waders that feed off Spurn. It was last seen at Chalk Bank at 19.30 on 6th August, by R. Evison and others. What was presumed to be the same bird was watched the next day at North Coates, Lincolnshire, at 10.30 by Howard Bunn and from 12.00 to 12.30 by John Leece.

SIZE, SHAPE AND STRUCTURE Although never fed or roosted in direct association with other waders, seen fairly close to Ringed Plovers and Turnstones *Arenaria interpres* on number of occasions. Clearly larger than Ringed Plover, with body bulk comparable to small Turnstone. Oddly-shaped, with short tail, very long legs (nearly twice as long as those of Ringed Plover) set well back, and thick long bill (for a plover): likened by BRS to gigantic nestling Ringed Plover. Bill judged to be slightly longer than distance from base of bill to back of eye; slightly swollen just before ending in blunt point. In flight, proportionately longer wings than Ringed Plover.

On ground, had hunched appearance, stretching neck only when pulling large worms out of mud; wing tips either equal to or extending slightly beyond tip of tail.

PLUMAGE Forehead white, with white extending over and behind eye in narrow line, forming narrow indistinct supercilium. Very narrow straight black bar (usually visible only through telescope at range of 40m or less) above white forehead, with off-white just above bar, merging into crown colour. Crown dark dun-brown, with all feathers broadly edged pale fawn/grey. Nape much paler, with some small dark marks. Upperparts pale dun, sometimes in strong light

showing greyish cast. Rump pale lawn, quite distinct from upperparts and tail. Tail feathers 'bleached' dark brown on central, shading to sandy, then white of outer tail feathers. Narrow, pale (sandy?) fringe to tip of tail. Large black smudge below and behind eye. Broken breast band formed by pale chestnut patches at sides, with blackish smudge along upper edges. Undertail-coverts pale brown. Rest of underparts and underwing white. Primaries dark brown, with white shafts showing in flight. Leading edge of wing also dark brown, with rest of wing when closed apparently plain pale grey/

fawn. In flight, conspicuous white wing bar, but unclear what formed this as no white seen on closed wing when at rest.

BARE PARTS Bill black. Eye dark. Legs brownish yellow.

CALL. Heard to call on only two occasions. When 'seen off' by Ringed Plover on 29th July uttered trill, described by BRS as rather like that of Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*, but slower and mellower; and by RPC as soft 'trrrrp' rather similar to Turnstone's call. On evening of 6th August, call described by RE as 'trill quite unfamiliar to us all'.

One would assume that the western race *columbinus* would be the most likely to occur in Britain, and S. C. Madge (*in litt.*) commented 'bill not as heavy as I expected, with slight expansion before tip. But bill as I would expect from Western Greater (Eastern birds tend to have bigger bills)'. As can be seen from the plumage description, it was in partial summer plumage; as no signs of moult were detected, this suggests that it was a non-breeder in first-summer plumage. The black bar across the forehead suggests that it was a male, as this character is apparently rarely exhibited by females.

This constitutes the fifth record for Britain and Ireland, the previous four all having been since late 1978: in December-January 1978/79, June 1979, November-February 1979/80 and April 1981 (*Brit. Birds* 73: 568-573, 583-586; 74: 467; 75: 499).

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Call of Pintail Snipe In eastern Saudi Arabia, between 12th October 1981 and 12th March 1982, I located four individual Pintail Snipes *Gallinago stenura* in three localities. One over-wintered and was seen also by J. H. Morgan and J. Palfery on a number of occasions. Comparison was made with the many Snipes *G. gallinago* invariably also present. The Pintail Snipes were immediately recognisable on every occasion by their call-notes.

The first Pintail Snipe remained in a marshy area for four weeks and puzzled observers by showing darker greater coverts than secondaries, contrary to the sketch in Madge (1977). It was heavier-looking than a Snipe, called almost invariably on rising, and took short flights unless rising with a Snipe, when it would fly away in the company of the commoner species. The second, which over-wintered, was more pot-bellied than Snipe, but actually slightly smaller, with a fractionally shorter bill when the two were compared closely. This individual was flushed a minimum of 25 times in four months and called two or three times on rising. The call immediately separated it from a zig-zagging Snipe, and even picked it out on one occasion when it flew overhead in a crowd of other waders and ducks. This bird often took short flights of 50-100 m, but its escape behaviour was not always the same, and it would frequently circle overhead at about 100 m, giving good views of its underwing, before pitching in another patch of marshy cover.

All four Pintail Snipes were apparently more vocal than those found by Madge (1977) and Kitson (1978), while even *BLP* states that the species often rises silently and that it has a similar call to Snipe. All observers will be familiar with the slurred, rather drawn-out, sometimes almost disyllabic, slightly rising 'scaaaap' of Snipe, and few, I suspect, would fail to detect a calling Pintail. The call was adequately described by Kitson (1978): a short, rasping 'squik'. My own notes give a number of interpretations, mostly 'ketch', 'etch', 'chenk' or 'chet'. It is essentially sharper, shorter, and, to my ears, higher-pitched, than that of Snipe. It is harsh, nasal, and sometimes metallic. I once noted an almost squealing quality, with the note slightly descending in pitch as the bird rose from underfoot. On another occasion, I likened the 'chet' note to that uttered by nearby migrant Swallows *Hirundo rustica*. In my opinion, it could never be confused with that of Snipe.

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Leg and bill colours of Ring-billed Gull Referring to second-winter Ring-billed Gulls *Larus delawarensis*, Grant (1979, 1982) stated that some individuals have the yellow 'well developed' on bare parts, but did not mention any as having grey bare parts. During a visit to the west coast of the USA in winter 1979/80, I observed one or two second-winter Ring-billed Gulls which had grey legs and bills; had I searched actively for this feature, I could probably have found more. At the time, I noted that the bill and leg colour was similar to that of the mantle and scapulars, a fact confirmed by colour slides.

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Professor Stanley Harris of the Department of Wildlife Management, Humboldt State University, Arcata, California, has summarised the bill-base and leg colour of Ring-billed Gulls as follows: 'Adult: yellow/orange in summer, fading to yellow-green or yellowish in winter; second-winter: greenish-yellow, sometimes greenish-grey; first-winter: pinkish/greenish; juvenile: pinkish-flesh. There is much individual variation.' Eds

Forster's Tern in Cornwall The autumn passage of terns *Sterna* on the estuaries of east Cornwall was poor in 1982, with unusually low numbers of all the regular species. There was, however, some compensation on 4th October when we popped out for a quick look at the nearby estuary of the River Lynher at 17.00 GMT. At Wacker, we scanned the river; the tide was

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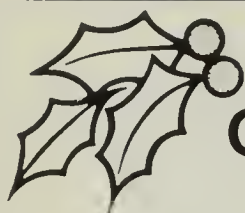
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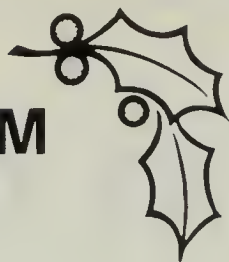


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S.C. Madge, British Birds 76:8

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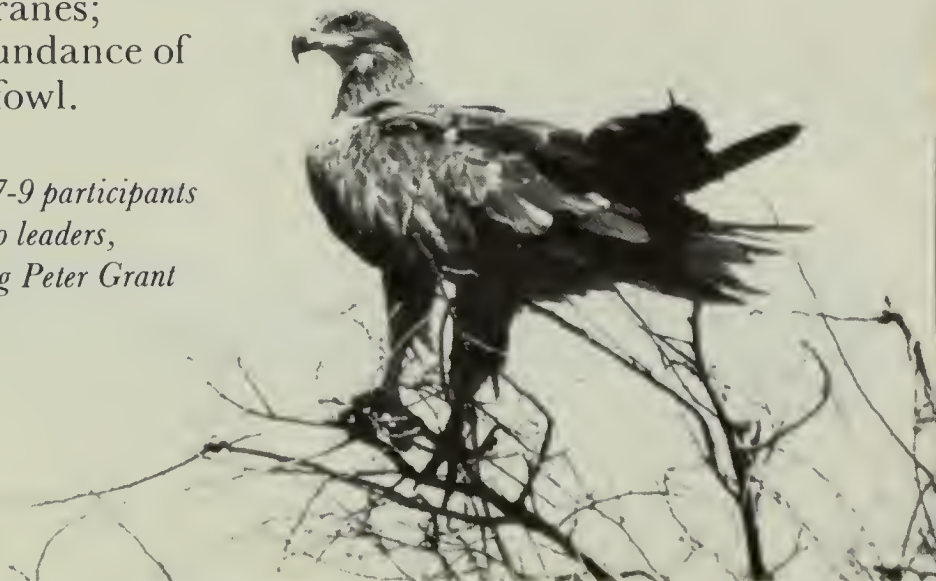


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fully in and a lone 'Commic' Tern *S. hirundo*/*S. paradisaea* was beating along in mid-river some 600m away. SCM set up the telescope to specify it and was amazed to find that it had an all-white crown, a black mask and a long, slender bill. Realising that this could fit only Forster's Tern *S. forsteri*, we took down as much detail as possible during the next 15 minutes. After alerting other birders by telephone, we watched the bird for the remaining hour or so of daylight, joined by A. E. C. Aston.

The following morning saw some 30 or so birders at Wacker, but the bird did not show again until 16.30 GMT, when AECA, SCM and E. Griffiths relocated it off Jupiter Point, some 3km to the east. For the next four days, it frequented a 4-km stretch of the Lynher, between Wacker and Beggar's Island. It was last seen at dusk on 8th October, after having been seen by a considerable number of people.

At a distance it was strikingly pale, the silvery primaries and secondaries contrasting with the greyer wing-coverts and upperparts and the darker grey tips to the primaries. When seen head-on, the head pattern was very conspicuous, but at all times the greyer tail (supposed to be a good field characteristic) was extremely difficult to make out, although darker tips to the tail feathers were often quite apparent. The following details were noted:

SIZE AND STRUCTURE In direct comparison with first-winter Arctic Terns *S. paradisaea*, Forster's looked 10-15% larger, with markedly broader wings, larger head and body, and markedly longer bill, latter seemingly a little longer than that of Common Tern *S. hirundo*, recalling bill of Roseate Tern *S. dougallii*. Tail relatively short, but deeply forked. When it perched on the mud, R. Smaldon noted that legs looked 'long and substantial', and stance was rather upright, with noticeably large head.

BARE PARTS Legs and feet bright reddish-orange. Bill black, with no reddish visible. Eye dark.

HEAD White with inconspicuous, pale grey wash on nape, and striking black patch extending from just before eye, back through eye as linear, rectangular 'mask'.

UNDERSIDE Body white. Underwing appeared white in bright light, with broad smudgy dark trailing edge to primaries (formed by dusky tips to about six outermost primaries). In shadow, underwing appeared greyer, with pale greyish primaries and secondaries, whiter coverts and still-whiter band along trailing edge of secondaries and innermost primaries, offering contrast with dusky outermost primary and primary tips (detailed above). Inconspicuous white line

along marginal underwing-coverts from body to under primary coverts.

UPPERSIDE Mantle, scapulars, back and upperwing pale grey; when perched, buff/cinnamon wash on greater coverts noted by RS, but otherwise all observations made in flight. No dark carpal bar, but upperwing showed faint mottling on greater coverts, possibly caused by pale feather edges and darker feather centres. Primaries, secondaries and fringes of greater coverts whiter than wing-coverts, offering contrast almost suggestive of Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*, but less striking. Uppercide of primaries showed dusky tips to outermost feathers (as detailed on underwing), forming dark trailing edge, and dark outermost primary (or at least outer web) as well as dark lines along inner (?) webs of outermost primaries, sometimes giving effect of dark outermost feathers, suggesting Sandwich Tern *S. sandvicensis* in this respect.

TAIL Deeply forked, pale grey, paler than mantle but offering some slight contrast with whiter rump and tail-coverts and whiter outermost tail feather. Dusky tips to all but centremost tail feathers, best seen as tail spread when tern about to dive. (Grey tail very hard to determine in the field.)

The bird spent most of its time feeding along the tide's edge, diving more forcefully than Arctic Tern, so recalling Sandwich Tern. Its wing beats



244. First-winter Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri*, Cornwall, October 1982 (S. C. Madge)

were heavier, steadier, and less buoyant than those of Arctic Tern. At some distance, the whiteness of plumage, long bill, short tail and strong dives were all suggestive of Sandwich rather than Common Tern. The striking head pattern was suggestive of Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*, and perhaps also of Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus* in certain non-breeding plumages. A combination of factors, however, made this a relatively easy bird to identify: especially the slender bill, black mask, white crown and Common-Tern size. The mottling on the inner greater coverts and the dark tips to the tail feathers indicated its age as first-winter.

This constitutes the second record for Britain and Ireland, the previous one being as recent as early 1980, also in Cornwall (*Brit. Birds* 75: 55-61).

S. C. MADGE and P. S. MADGE

2 Church Row, Sheviock, Torpoint, Cornwall PL11 3EH

Little Swift in Dyfed At about 10.00 GMT on 31st May 1981, Peter Conder saw a small swift *Apus* with a white rump flying with some House Martins *Delichon urbica* at Little Bay Point on the north coast of Skokholm, Dyfed. Visibility was poor, with 8 oktas cloud cover, fog, intermittent drizzle and a light southeasterly breeze. He alerted GG, EG and M. de L. Brooke, and all four of us had good views of the bird as it hunted near the Bird Observatory buildings. The fog cleared later, and we had excellent views of the bird in bright sunlight as it fed around the cliffs, again with House Martins. There we were able to watch it from above, and frequently it flew within 2 m. It was seen throughout the day by all observers, and again the following morning.

It was similar in size to the accompanying House Martins, but was easily distinguished by its longer, swift-shaped wings and unforked tail. Its agile flight alternated rapid wingbeats with gliding and rapid 'sideslips', as does that of the common Swift *Apus apus*. The bird was identified as a Little Swift *A. affinis* by Peter Conder, who was familiar with the species from regular trips to Pakistan and elsewhere.

The following details were noted:

PLUMAGE Wholly blackish brown except for paler brown forehead, pale grey throat, and white rump-patch (square-cut on leading edge and extending slightly around towards vent).

STRUCTURE Wings long and broad-based, with sickle-shaped leading edge. Tail slightly rounded when spread, otherwise short and blunt.

This is the fourth record of Little Swift in Britain and Ireland, the previous ones being in Co. Cork in June 1967 (*Brit. Birds* 61: 160-162), in Denbighshire in November 1973 (*Brit. Birds* 67: 328-329) and in Cornwall on 16th May 1981 (*Brit. Birds* 74: plates 189 & 190; 75: 512).

GRAHAM GYNN and ELIZABETH GYNN

The Bird Observatory, Skokholm, c/o West Wales Naturalists' Trust, 7 Market Street, Haverfordwest, Dyfed

Roost nest of Wren The note on a Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* apparently building a winter roosting-nest (*Brit. Birds* 73: 106-107) recalls the following. In 1978, at Groes Faen, Mid Glamorgan, a pair of Swallows *Hirundo rustica* nested about 2m from the ground in the centre of a roof beam of a barn. In late December, I found the roofing part of a Wren's nest built in dome fashion on the Swallow's nest; this remained until April 1979, when the Swallows returned and I removed it (breeding by Wrens was unlikely in

245. Nest of Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* built in old nest of Swallow *Hirundo rustica*, probably in November 1979, Mid Glamorgan, December 1979 (*R. G. Smith*)



such an exposed site). The Swallows, however, did not re-use the nest, but bred in another barn. I inspected the nest in October 1979 and the situation was the same. In December, I again found a Wren's nest on the Swallow's original nest. Both Wren nests were constructed of nothing but straw, and both were estimated to have been built in the November before I discovered them. The barn was used for housing eight to ten head of cattle; the temperature on cold nights must have been a great attraction to a Wren as a roost site.

RICHARD G. SMITH

29 Marlborough Close, Crown Hill, Llantwit Fardre, Mid Glamorgan

Robin eating velvet shank fungus At 14.30 GMT on 11th January 1982, in a wood at West Bagborough, Taunton, Somerset, I saw a Robin *Erithacus rubecula* pulling at the side of a cap of velvet shank fungus *Flammulina velutipes*, one of a large cluster growing on a dead stump of English elm *Ulmus procera*. It tore off and swallowed two portions before flying off. Weather conditions had been very frosty, and snow lay in the area, but recent direct sun had partly thawed some of the velvet shanks. Inspection of the fungi did not show any evidence of associated invertebrates. Velvet shank is a common winter-growing agaric which is frost-resistant and edible for man. The Robin was probably exploiting a readily available vegetable food source at a time when animal food was hard to obtain.

A. P. RADFORD

Crossways Cottage, West Bagborough, Taunton, Somerset TA4 3EG

Starling eating Jew's-ear fungus At midday on 9th November 1980, in a garden at Brentry, Bristol, I saw a Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* pulling off and swallowing specimens of Jew's-ear fungus *Auricularia auricularia* from a dead branch of elder *Sambucus nigra*. The fungal specimens taken were young ones about 1-2cm in diameter, and at least three were eaten; the larger specimens were ignored. Subsequent inspection of the branch showed no evidence of associated invertebrates. As Jew's-ear is considered edible for human beings, perhaps it is not surprising that it should be eaten by Starlings.

A. P. RADFORD

Crossways Cottage, West Bagborough, Taunton, Somerset TA4 3EG

Scarlet Tanager in Cornwall On the morning of 11th October 1981, G. Cockhill and I were covering Nanquidno valley, Cornwall, for migrant birds when, on turning a corner of an old derelict building, I put up a bright green-and-black bird from the ground. It flew about 10m to a nearby tree. My first thought was of oriole, but on raising my binoculars I could see that the bird was an American tanager *Piranga*.

The bird then flew back to the ground on a nearby footpath, where it began to feed in the fashion of a large warbler. I called G. Cockhill's attention to the bird and we watched it for about 40 minutes. During this time, we consulted the American Peterson field guide (1980, *A Field Guide to the Birds East of the Rockies*) and came to the conclusion that the bird was a



246-248. First-winter male Scarlet Tanager *Piranga olivacea*, Cornwall, October 1981 (B. K. Mellow)



first-winter male Scarlet Tanager *P. olivacea*. During this time, the bird seemed oblivious of our presence and, as we stayed still, it came to within about 3 m of us (plates 246-248). It fed on blackberries and was also seen to catch an occasional crane-fly (Tipulidae), its movements recalling a *Hippolais* warbler. We left the tanager feeding in this area and proceeded to St Just, where we informed several Cornish birders of its presence. On our return others had independently relocated the tanager. It showed itself only briefly, however, and disappeared into cover, not to be seen again.

We obtained the following description:

SIZE AND JIZZ Like overgrown Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*; and indeed looked very finch-like at times, with stout, conical bill. Usually, however, behaved like large warbler, occasionally flycatching, and with deliberate short flights to next perch.

UPPERPARTS Forehead brown; nape and back bright yellow/green; tail dark, with yellow/green edgings to feathers. Lesser, median and greater wing-coverts jet-black.

Primaries and secondaries much paler, with broad yellow/green edgings.

UNDERPARTS Chin, throat and undertail-coverts bright lemon-yellow. Breast and belly darker yellow; flanks whiter, merging with breast and belly.

BARE PARTS Bill long and conical, flesh-pink, with hint of grey on upper mandible. Eye large and dark; legs grey-blue.

B. K. MELLOW

8 Tregothnan Road, Malpas Estate, Truro, Cornwall

On the morning of 11th October 1981, Dave Gibbs, Chris Thain, Tim Robinson, Guy Evans and I were at Nanquidno, Cornwall, a small valley

north of Land's End. At about 09.00 GMT, shortly after we arrived, I noticed a small bird fly into a tree about 15m away. It perched for a short time on a bare branch, then dropped onto the ground out of sight. Its plumage recalled a male Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*, but I was baffled as to its identity. I told the others, and DG soon relocated it on the ground about 5 m away and identified it as an immature male Scarlet Tanager *Piranga olivacea*. It then flew up onto a wall before disappearing into a garden on the far side. We watched the bird for only a few minutes, but at very close range, and were able to take the following description:

Size of large finch, with long, heavy bill.	seen clearly. Tail black. Wing-coverts pure
Head and breast bright yellow, fading to pale	black. Primaries and secondaries black, with
yellow on belly. Undertail-coverts bright	narrow olive edgings. Wings contrasted
yellow. Mantle and scapulars olive or dark	sharply with yellow body. Bare parts: bill
yellow; rump probably same, though not	and legs appeared pale flesh.

We saw the bird, briefly, at the back of the garden in a dense hedge, but it was not relocated even though the area was searched for the rest of the day. We later discovered that the bird had been seen and identified earlier by local Cornish birdwatchers, who we subsequently learnt were B. K. Mellow and G. Cockhill (see above).

There had been sustained strong westerly winds during the previous week and other North American landbirds were found around this time: a Bobolink *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* on 7th, a *Dendroica* warbler on 10th, and a Common Nighthawk *Chordeiles minor* on 12th, all on St Mary's, Scilly.

This is the third record of Scarlet Tanager in Britain and the first on the mainland. The earlier ones were on St Mary's, Scilly, on 4th October 1970 (*Brit. Birds* 65: 155-158) and on Tresco, also Scilly, from 28th September to 3rd October 1975 (*Brit. Birds* 70: 300-301); both were also immature males.

JEREMY HOLDING

21 Hiddleston Avenue, Newcastle upon Tyne NE7 7NJ

We have not previously published two accounts of the finding of a rarity, but in this case the second finders were quite unaware of the discovery made earlier in the day and, indeed, were unaware of the identity of the original discoverers until after Jeremy Holding's typescript had been accepted for publication. Eds

Seventy-five years ago...

'ON THE SONG OF THE WOOD-WARBLE; BY H. W. MAPLETON, B.A., M.B.O.U. IN May last, while availing myself of a very good opportunity of observing a Wood-Warbler in full song my attention was called to the fact that this bird has two distinct songs. As I do not remember to have seen this fact recorded in works on British birds, I thought it possible that a few notes on the subject might prove of interest . . . The first of these is the ordinary song, which needs no description here. The second song, which is much rarer than the first, varies considerably in different individuals as regards the number of syllables, though the tone is constant . . . It is sweet, and rather plaintive in tone, falling gradually from F sharp to E flat, or possibly D . . . In character it resembles to a certain extent the ecstatic "tail-end" of the full song of the Tree-Pipit. The last and lowest note of this song seems to be the same as that used as a call-note when the young are fledged and flying about in family parties.' (*Brit. Birds* 2: 226, December 1908)

Letters

Shy Albatrosses, elusive Capped Petrels, and great accumulations of shearwaters It is curious how well the observation by Paul Buckley and William Russell, that some European birdwatchers do not appear to be making much progress with seabirds, is borne out by other contributions later in the same issue of *British Birds* (75: 554-558, 585-588), which may help to provide an explanation. Thus, it seems possible that the bird identified as one of the Pacific races of Shy Albatross *Diomedea cauta salvini* in plate 230 may be the type of immature of the nominate race which has been causing the identification problems off South Africa mentioned in my letter on the opposite side of the same sheet of paper. To be sure, it would be necessary to see the underwing, shown with a better example of *D. c. salvini* in the next plate, since that race normally has more black around the margin and at the tip at all ages than does *D. c. cauta*, already illustrated in *British Birds* (59: plate 62) and by P. C. Harper and F. C. Kinsky in their *Southern Albatrosses and Petrels* (1980; page 29 and plate 3). It seems a pity that the editors do not take advice on such matters. It might also be wise to exercise caution over the use of 'tangible field-marks', recommended by Peter Grant, since any albatross that lands in a field is liable to bite when touched.

This type of response seems likely to explain why progress with European offshore birds now tends to be published elsewhere, notably in *Sea Swallow*. In view of the report by Buckley & Russell of the number of Capped Petrels *Pterodroma hasitata* now being recorded off the east coast of North America, it may be particularly useful to direct attention to another recent record, by Robert Dannenger (*Orn. Mitt.* 34: 107-117), of their occurrence on this side of the Atlantic as well, over the southwest edge of the Rockall Bank on 26th February 1980. Since the ownership of the area is currently in dispute between Britain, the Republic of Ireland and the Faeroes, they appear to be candidates for no less than three national tick-lists. Is this a record?

A growing number of observations of seabird distribution in relation to water temperatures recorded by satellites may help explain such observations. Thus, for example, I now find that a vast concourse of Great Shearwaters *Puffinus gravis* which I encountered off the mouth of the English Channel on 27th August 1973 and attributed to an invasion (*Brit. Birds* 66: 540) must in fact have been located over the marine front at the edge of the continental shelf subsequently described by R. D. Pingree and G. T. Mardell (*Phil. Trans. Roy. Soc. Lond. A* 302: 663-682). Since comparable numbers have also been recorded there by D. Prieur, on 13th September 1969 (*Ar Vran* 3: 42-50), and by Dr M. P. Harris, on 14th October 1973 (*Dansk Orn. Foren. Tidsskr.* 68: 117-137), it may be a regular phenomenon. Similarly, it also seems possible that young Capped Petrels, which move north over the Gulf Stream in the summer after fledging, may sometimes also accumulate along the shelfbreak front farther north, off the Hebrides, when their parents return to the West Indies to breed during the following winter; it is notable that the only reliable previous European record, in

Norfolk in 1852 (*Ibis* 109: 141-167), also occurred at the same surprising season (March or April).

W. R. P. BOURNE

Zoology Department, The University, Aberdeen

Bittern swimming I should like to draw attention to a note by me published in 1959 in *Die Vogelwelt* (80: 115-116) concerning a Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* swimming in the same manner as that described by C. J. Booth (*Brit. Birds* 76: 309).

German ornithological literature seems to be much neglected in English books and periodicals.

GÜNTHER A. J. SCHMIDT

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Regrettably, Herr Schmidt's conclusion is true. Perusal of the lists of references at the ends of papers in German journals similarly reveals a very low proportion of English (indeed, of non-German) citations. The main cause is presumably the language problem, which may be alleviated by the recent publication of *Öko-ornithologisches Glossarium*. Additionally, many scientists in the natural history field do tend to be insular rather than international in their outlook; though, to their credit, this is much less true in the Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries. Eds

Bill-tip pattern of Ferruginous Duck May I draw attention to the slightly questionable bill-tips of the Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca* shown in plate 78 of *BWP* (vol. 1: 1977) and repeated in *The Wildfowl of Britain and Europe* (1983). The plate suggests that the Ferruginous Duck's bill is dark-tipped, whereas, for both sexes, it is normally black only on the nail.

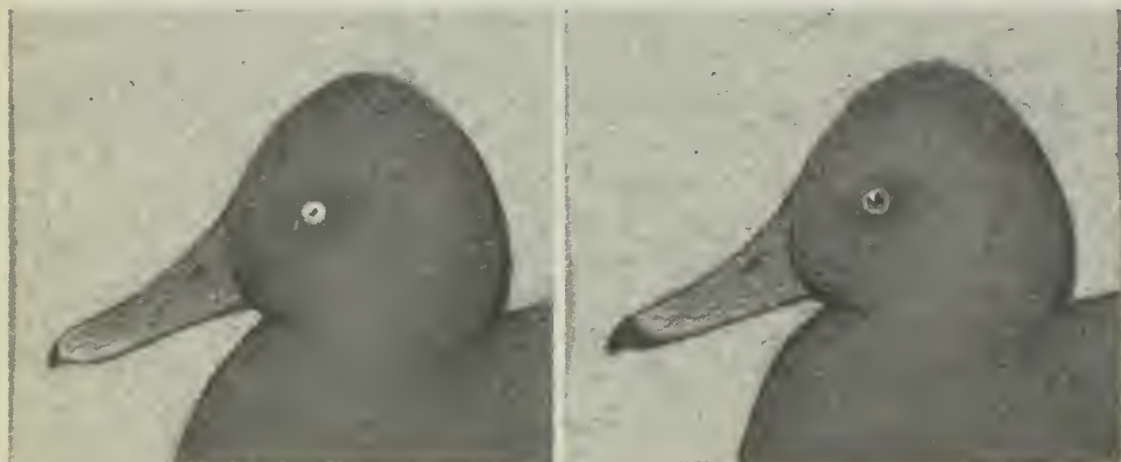


Fig. 1. Heads of, left, male Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca* (female similar, but has brown rather than white eye); and, right, a typical hybrid (Ferruginous Duck \times Pochard *A. ferina*), which usually has brown or reddish iris. Note Ferruginous Duck's finely tipped bill, dark on nail only, in comparison with hybrid's generally broader dark tip (*Sketches by Ken Osborne*)

One enterprising observer in the London area has already claimed an *Aythya* hybrid as a female Ferruginous Duck on the strength of this plate. Fieldworkers are therefore reminded of the pitfalls of hybrids; wherever possible, bill-tips should be checked (see fig. 1). Readers wishing to pursue the subject of *Aythya* hybrids are referred to Gillham *et al.* (1966) and Osborne (1972); additionally, hybrids can be seen at close quarters at the Wildfowl Trust at Slimbridge, Gloucestershire.

KEN OSBORNE

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OSBORNE, K. C., 1972. The need for caution when identifying Scaup, Ferruginous Duck and other species in the *Aythya* genus. *London Bird Rep.* 36: 86-91.

Status of Paddyfield Warbler in Romania The Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola* is known to breed from Manchuria, China and Kashmir westwards to south Russia and Romania. Until recently, data on the status of this species in the westernmost part of its range were scarce. Vasiliu (1968) mentioned a single record of three caught in June 1952 in the Danube Delta. Later, Paspaleva (1976) caught ten during May to September 1975 (four in May, four in August, and two in September), near Sulina, also in the Dobrudja area. During a survey of the *Acrocephalus* species breeding in the Danube Delta, Paspaleva & Talpeanu (1980) found Paddyfield Warbler much commoner than previously suspected. They wrote: '[the species] appears en masse at the end of May and in June (breeding); is hardly visible in July (incubation period and very inconspicuous). It reappears in increasing numbers during the next two months (with many juveniles) and disappears in October, as the post-breeding migration is over at the end of September' (my translation).

They caught 21 during 1975-79 (11 in 1975, eight in 1976, and singles in 1977 and 1978), of which 18 were caught near Sulina. They studied nine distinct areas and found Paddyfield Warblers in five, the usual habitat being large, more-or-less-dense, fixed or floating reedbeds. Talpeanu & Paspaleva (1981) concluded, from observations and censuses carried out in parallel with the mist-net work, that Paddyfield Warblers are much more numerous than they suspected from the captures alone, and are common, especially in May, in the coastal reedbeds south of Sulina.

In August 1979, I saw two in the Danube Delta (one on 9th at Calica, and an immature photographed on 18th on Insula Lupilor). More astonishing is my observation of a Paddyfield Warbler on 1st August in a reedbed near the Mostiștea River, about 25 km north of Bucharest and 230 km from the Danube Delta. Is the species now breeding so far inland?

With the recent increase of breeding records in Romania, the Black Sea area should be an increasingly possible source for West European vagrants.

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House Sparrows down underground stations I refer to Michael J. Thomas's note on House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* underground at Euston station (*Brit. Birds* 76: 412). The Jubilee line does not go to Euston, but I have twice seen a single House Sparrow on the southbound Victoria line

platform at Euston. On the first occasion, on 2nd December 1982, I noted that the sparrow was not nervous: it hopped about on the platform a few metres from a sitting person, and allowed approach to within about 2m.

MICHAEL J. EARP

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Michael J. Thomas has confirmed that his observation, in October 1980, was also on the Victoria line. Eds

Diary dates

This list covers events taking place during January to December 1984. We welcome submission of details for possible inclusion in the next list, covering July 1984 to June 1985.

6th-8th January BTO RINGING AND MIGRATION CONFERENCE. Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire. Applications to BTO, Beech Grove, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 5NR.

10th January BRITISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB. M. K. Swales on 'The Denstone College Expedition to Inaccessible Island'. Central London. Non-members should write (enclosing SAE) at least two weeks before to Hon. Secretary, R. E. F. Peal, 2 Chestnut Lane, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 3AR.

31st January Closing date for entries for 'Bird Photograph of the Year'.

31st January Closing date for entries for 'Best recent black-and-white bird-photographs'.

17th-19th February BTO SPRING CONFERENCE. 'Birds of Prey', Swanwick. Applications to BTO.

18th February RSPB FILM PREMIERE. Royal Festival Hall.

6th March BOC. Philip Belman on 'The Greenland White-fronted Goose'. Central London. Information from Hon. Sec.

10th-11th March IWC/RSPB ALL-IRELAND CONFERENCE ON BIRD CONSERVATION. Wexford. Details from IWC, Southview, Church Road, Greystones, Co. Wicklow, Ireland.

13th March-8th May YOUNG ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB MIGRATION PHONE-IN. Telephone Sandy (0767) 80551. Tuesdays only, 5 p.m. — 7.30 p.m. Records from adults welcomed.

14th March Closing date for entries for 'Bird Illustrator of the Year'.

5th-8th April BRITISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION ANNUAL CONFERENCE. Cardiff University. 'Foraging strategies'. Applications to

Meetings Secretary, BOU, c/o Zoological Society of London, Regent's Park, London NW1 4RY. (Note that Conference starts on Thursday evening.)

6th-8th April RSPB MEMBERS' WEEKEND. University of York. Details from RSPB Conference Organiser, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

7th April BTO REGIONAL CONFERENCE. Ayr. Applications to BTO.

7th May YOC NATIONAL SPONSORED BIRD-WATCH.

May (exact date not yet available) WILDFOWL TRUST AGM.

17th October RSPB LONDON DAY & AGM. Details from RSPB Conference Organiser.

2nd-4th November (provisional) SCOTTISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB ANNUAL CONFERENCE & AGM. Marine Hotel, North Berwick. Applications to Club Secretary, SOC, 21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5BT.

3rd November (provisional) BOU AUTUMN SCIENTIFIC MEETING. Applications to Meetings Secretary, BOU.

3rd November BTO REGIONAL CONFERENCE. Southampton. Applications to BTO.

30th November-2nd December BTO ANNUAL CONFERENCE & AGM. Swanwick. Applications to BTO.

30th November-2nd December (provisional) NATIONAL EXHIBITION OF CAGE AND AVIARY BIRDS. Details from Philip Read, Editor, 'Cage and Aviary Birds', Surrey House, 1 Throwley Way, Sutton, Surrey SM1 1QQ.

11th December BOC. Dr Ian Newton on 'Recent studies of Sparrowhawks'. Central London. Information from Hon. Sec.

Sheila D. Cobban, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3XJ

BB Tours

In this new venture (announced recently, *Brit. Birds* 76: 539-540), we offer exclusively to *BB* readers the chance to take part in some specially devised trips to good bird spots abroad. All the booking, accommodation and travelling arrangements will be made on our behalf by the experienced bird-tour operators Sunbird/Wings, and each tour will be accompanied by a Sunbird/Wings leader and a knowledgeable *BB* birder. With two leaders always present, and a small group, we aim to ensure that each trip caters for the wishes of participants at all levels of expertise (bearing in mind that everyone on the trip will be a *BB* subscriber, so presumably pretty keen!). We hope that there will be plenty of discussion on the finer points of identification for those who wish to improve their field skills, but our main aims are for a smooth-running and—especially—a thoroughly enjoyable tour.



249. White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*, March 1978 (T. Shiota)

North-central France 24th-27th February 1984

Magnificent White-tailed Eagles and spectacular flocks of Cranes will be the main quest during this long-weekend visit to the attractive lakes south-east of Paris. The Lac de la Forêt d'Orient and the Lac du Der-Chantecoq also provide wintering grounds for a host of wildfowl and Bean Geese, while numerous birds of prey, Middle Spotted Woodpecker (possibly Black Woodpecker, too) and Short-toed Treecreeper are among the species to be found in the surrounding countryside and woods.

Price includes all travel (from London and Dover pick-up points) and three nights (including bed and breakfast and evening meal) in a comfortable hotel adjacent to the lakes. The leaders will be Peter Grant and David Fisher. £180.00 (four days). *Numbers will be strictly limited to seven to nine participants*, plus the two leaders, so early booking is recommended.

For further details and booking form, please write or telephone to BB Tours, Sunbird, PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DF; telephone Sandy (0767) 82969.

Announcements

Binding your BBs We should like to remind readers that special binders to hold a full year's issues can be purchased by post for £4.30 (overseas postage 35p extra) from Easibind, 42 Hoxton Square, London N1 6NS.

Standard book-binding of the year's issues into a single volume is also available as usual, from P. G. Chapman & Co. Ltd (£9.75 per volume): please use the binding forms on the back cover of the index.

Cover designs for sale by postal auction The following original drawings used on *BB* covers are available:

Artist	Subject	Size (cm)	Issue
S. B. Cull	Ravens	18.3×20.6	April 1983
Robert Gillmor	Ptarmigan	12.4×14.0	December 1983

Send in your bid, following the usual procedure (see page 40 in January issue). Some artists place a reserve price on their drawings, but successful bids have varied from £10 to £100 (average £35), so you could pick up a real bargain!

January is late every year To save widespread nail-biting, worry and consternation, we wish to remind subscribers that, as usual, our January issue will appear in mid month rather than during the first week. Perhaps this can be attributed to the wild, bacchanalian parties in which our printers and editorial staff always become involved over the Christmas and New Year period. Normal service is usually resumed by February.

The new Peterson Collins has apologised to *BB* readers through us and has asked us to publish the following statement:

'Collins Publishers very much regret that certain of the colour plates in some copies of the 4th edition of *A Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe*, by Peterson, Mountfort & Hollom, have suffered from sub-standard colour printing as the result of a technical problem for which neither the artist nor the authors were responsible. This will be corrected in the next impression; meanwhile, Collins are preparing a 16-page "offprint" to a high reproductive standard of the seven plates which have suffered most. This offprint is available free of charge to purchasers of the new edition. Those for whom this is not a satisfactory remedy are asked to return their copy/copies: the purchase price, as well as the cost of postage, will be refunded.'

Please write to Crispin Fisher, Collins Publishers, 8 Grafton Street, London W1X 3LA.

Sponsored by



Bird Photograph of the Year This annual competition will again be run by *British Birds* and sponsored by Matthew Gloag & Son Ltd, proprietors of 'The Famous Grouse' whisky. The full rules (similar to those last year, *Brit. Birds* 76: 38) will be published next month. The closing date is 31st January 1984.

Best recent black-and-white bird-photographs The closing date for submission of prints for the twenty-fifth annual selection is 31st January 1984. The full rules (similar to those last year, *Brit. Birds* 76: 38) will be published next month.

Requests

Winter Atlas The BTO/IWC Winter Atlas is now in its third and final year of fieldwork. Counts of birds are wanted from all areas, but help is especially needed in parts of northwest Scotland, southwest England and Ireland. If you are able to help, please write as soon as possible for further details, from Dr Peter Lack at BTO, Beech Grove, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 5NA.



Winter Atlas! (Kevin Baker)



Records from Mallorca Observers visiting this popular birdwatching venue are requested to submit details of their observations (from past as well as current visits) for publication in a periodic report. Records will be collated by Pat Watkinson, Apartado 72, Puerto Pollensa, Mallorca, Spain. (Pat is well known to many birders visiting Mallorca for all her help and organisation; she will always welcome contact from prospective visiting birdwatchers: telephone Puerto Pollensa 532540.) Records, particularly past information, can also be submitted to Mrs Watkinson via R. E. Scott, c/o RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

News and comment

Mike Everett and Robin Prytherch

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

The conference that never was The RSPB/BOU/BTO conference on 'Loss of Critical Habitats for Birds'—scheduled to be held at the University of East Anglia during 20th-22nd September 1983, and with 18 very interesting-sounding papers by an eminent panel of lecturers—was cancelled at short notice, only one month before it was due to take place. It must have been a difficult

decision to take, for all potential speakers and prospective participants at future conferences must now wonder whether their work and planning is going to be wasted (preparation of a half-hour paper can take from several days to more than a week, even if it is 'only' the distillation of work already completed; and mere participation in a conference can require weeks of planning to

ensure a space in a busy diary). We hope that some of the disappointment can be overcome by quick publication of the papers, or summaries of them. But, was this most unusual situation really necessary? And, in the long-term, was it wise? It cannot fail to make the task of future conference organisers more difficult. We understand that it was all a matter of cost: only 80 people booked when the plan was to accommodate 150. Perhaps the major lessons to be learned by any organisation planning a bird conference in the near future are to be cautious, and to 'think small'. (Contributed by JTRS)

Andorran conservation We hear via the Council of Europe (*Newsletter: Nature*: 83-6) that the Capercaille *Tetrao urogallus* has been declared a 'protected species' in Andorra; that the Ptarmigan *Lagopus mutus* has been removed from the shooting list; and that hunting has been restricted to Thursdays and Sundays. It is also encouraging to note that two educational trails with guidebooks have been provided in an attempt to make schoolchildren conservation conscious.

Foster cranes We are grateful to Graham Taylor for drawing our attention to an interesting scheme involving the use of Cranes *Grus grus* as foster-parents for the rare Siberian Crane *G. leucogeranus*. The International Crane Foundation (ICF) confirms that two cranes bearing scarlet wing-tags and streamers which Graham saw in Turkey in April 1983 were marked in October 1982 at Oka State Nature Reserve, about 300 km south of Moscow. Oka has about 60 breeding pairs of Cranes and a captive flock of 'Siberians' (there is another in Wisconsin, USA). It is hoped to place Siberian Crane eggs under incubating common Cranes, using much the same techniques as have been developed successfully in the USA with Sandhill Cranes *G. canadensis* fostering Whooping Cranes *G. americana*, to produce a new wild flock. The Russians have colour-tagged Oka cranes in an attempt to identify their migration routes and wintering areas, the long-term aim being to provide them with protection throughout their range, in the interests of this project. Graham saw his two marked individuals in a flock of about 100 in the Lake Tuz area, south of Ankara: observers visiting Turkey, or indeed any other Middle East country, could usefully check any Crane flocks for tagged birds; details should be sent to the ICF: Dr G. Archibald, City View Road, Baraboo, Wisconsin 53913, USA.

Nepal posting 'The Queen has been pleased to approve the appointment of Mr A. G. Hurrell to be HM Ambassador to the Kingdom of Nepal . . .' says the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Press Release. It also states, rather delightfully, that 'his outside interests include bird-ringing, bird-watching, digging ponds and music'. David Bradshaw writes 'Birders have got a new and influential friend in high places . . .' Tony Hurrell hails from Norwich and is well known as a keen birdwatcher and ringer; a long spell in government service in overseas aid has already given him two years in Thailand. His new appointment has a certain rarity value too, in that ambassadorial appointments from outside the Diplomatic Service are distinctly uncommon.

Norwegian sanctuaries We were pleased to learn via the Council of Europe (*Newsletter: Nature*: 83-7) that the Norwegian government has established sanctuaries over 14 important seabird breeding cliffs totalling some 126 km² in Finnmark, including the sites at Loppa, Hjelmsøya, Gjesværstappan, Syltefjordstauren and Ekkerøya. All traffic is banned from the most vulnerable parts and fishing is forbidden during the auk breeding season, hunting is forbidden from 1st March to 1st October, and further measures protect flora and other fauna.

In praise of trades unions Among many comments made by Simon Albrecht upon his return to Britain, after the arrest of him and Dennis Buisson while birdwatching in Turkey (*Brit. Birds* 76: 321, 360, 419), the following may be not only of general interest, but also of practical help to anyone in a similar predicament: 'A point that I think should be known widely is the excellent help and support that we got from our trades union. By chance we are both members of ASTMS (Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs), which was in daily contact with the Foreign Office on our behalf and contacted numerous MPs, including the former and present Foreign Secretaries. Clive Jenkins even telephoned us personally in Istanbul, and lent us £100 each from the Union with instructions to telephone him at once if we needed to borrow more money. This support was totally unexpected . . . they could hardly have done more for us. If in the future a birder in trouble is a member of a trades union, one of the first things to do is to contact that union'.

Simon Albrecht has also further stressed the advice given by R. F. Porter (*Brit. Birds* 76: 360), that birdwatchers going to Turkey should contact the Turkish Embassy in London to discuss their trip beforehand.

An Irish Big Bird Race Quite how he qualified for inclusion remains a mystery, but Bill Oddie, co-star of the British, sponsored, 24-hour twitch described in *The Big Bird Race* (see review last month, *Brit. Birds* 76: 548), was in the four-man team which tried the same thing in Ireland on 17th September (plate 250).

At the stroke of midnight, John Coveney, Seán Fleming, Bill Oddie and Barry O'Mahony were bade farewell and good luck by the Lord Mayor of Cork as they set off from Cork City Hall. Twenty-four hours later they had recorded 102 species, and raised £1,000 for the Irish Wildbird Conservancy in the process. With a lunch-time total of 91, the final tally would certainly have been higher if they had not fallen foul of bad weather: with bird-rich Ballycotton yet unvisited, the heavens opened; in deluging rain, the last four hours before dusk yielded only eight extra species. Still, there's always next year. . . . (*Contributed by JTRS*)

What makes a birder great? Since the American magazine *Birding* has—like various other bird journals—flattered *BB* by copying our regular 'Mystery photographs' feature (they call it 'Photo Quiz'), I have no hesitation in quoting directly from a letter by Kenn Kaufman in their latest issue. When sitting on a panel at a meeting, he was asked what groups of birds could be (or should be) left unidentified in the field. He wishes that he had replied: 'Let's face it—some birds are really tough to tell apart in the field. But there is only one good reason for you to try to sort these birds out: for the fun of the challenge. If you *don't* enjoy that challenge, it is always acceptable—perfectly acceptable—to call such birds "unknown flycatchers" or "unidentified gulls" or whatever.

'Here is a good rule-of-thumb: if any group of birds leaves you confused or uncomfortable to the point that they interfere with your enjoyment of birding, just ignore that group. After all, nobody can name them all.

'Don't let anyone tell you that to be a "good birder" you have to identify a certain number of different species. Birding is something that we do for enjoyment; therefore, if you enjoy birding, you're a good birder. In fact, I would say that if you enjoy birding a lot, you are a great birder. And as a

250. Irish Sponsored Birdwatch team, September 1983: left to right, Bill Oddie, Barry O'Mahony, Seán Fleming and John Coveney ('*Cork Examiner*' & Richard T. Mills)



great birder you should never allow those tricky identification problems to keep you from having a good time in the field.'

What very mature, sound advice! Kenn Kaufman's reputation as a highly competent field man has crossed the Atlantic. Clearly, he must now also be classified as a 'great birder'. (Contributed by JTRS)

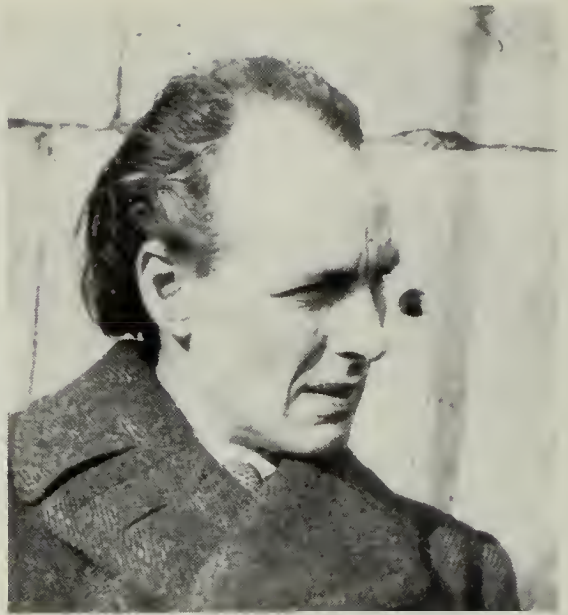
Biggest bird-brain gathering in history

A total of over 1,100 ornithologists attended the centennial meeting of the American Ornithologists' Union in New York during 26th-30th September 1983. The assembly was larger by about 300 than any International Ornithological Congress. About 300 12-minute papers were read, many of them earnestly, most of them hurriedly. A longer, opening paper was delivered by Ernst Mayr (now approaching 80 years of age, but as incisive as ever) under the title 'The role of ornithology in the history of biology'. Mayr also contributed an introduction to the volume *Perspectives in Ornithology: essays presented for the centennial*, a collection of scientific contributions refreshingly unconventional in several ways. The 6th edition of the AOU *Checklist* was also published in time for the meeting. (Contributed by Jeffery Boswall)

Mysterious solution Rumours abound concerning the enigma of *The 'British Birds' Mystery Photographs Book*. We can scotch two, with news from the compiler himself. First, you do *not* have to have an intimate knowledge of Norse or Icelandic sagas in order to solve the puzzle (who started that rumour, we wonder?); secondly, the £1,000 prize has *not* yet been won. One entry has been received, but the entrant—who failed to follow the rules to send it by Registered Post or Recorded Delivery—deliberately ignored many clues, misinterpreted others and ended up with the wrong answer—but a fascinatingly bizarre explanation of why it was right!

If you haven't yet got your copy of the book, it is still available at a reduced price to *BB* readers through British BirdShop (see page xiii).

Reginald Wagstaffe (1907-1983) Reginald Wagstaffe was born on 28th July 1907, and in due course went to the University of Cincinnati to attend a course on ornithology. After returning to the United Kingdom, he took up in succession a number of museum appointments. In 1941, he became Curator of the Yorkshire Museum, and in 1948 was



251. Reg Wagstaffe (1907-1983)

appointed Keeper of Vertebrate Zoology in the Liverpool City Museum, where he stayed for the rest of his working life.

Although Reg had amazing knowledge of, and a vast experience in, several branches of natural history, he was primarily a very distinguished taxonomic and field ornithologist, with a worldwide reputation. Amongst other activities, he wrote a definitive two-volume work on *The Preservation of Natural History Specimens*, was a founder member and leading light in the Liverpool Ornithologists' Club and was a member of the *British Birds* Rarities Committee for eight years, from 1963 to 1970.

Besides all this, his many devoted friends on Merseyside and elsewhere will remember with great affection his charming personality and his sense of humour.

We offer our sympathy to his wife, Trissie, his daughter, Ann, his son-in-law, Ian Prestt, and their family.

Reg will not be forgotten; may he rest in peace. (Contributed by Professor J. D. Craggs)

Wisbech under threat Looking back—probably nostalgically—to the much less hectic twitching days of the '60s and early '70s, many of us will remember Wisbech Sewage-farm for the good birds we saw there. It may pick up rather few cosmic mind-whatnots by today's crazy standards, but it remains excellent for passage waders, especially Little Stints *Calidris minuta* and Curlew Sandpipers *C. ferruginea*, for its incredibly regular Pectoral Sandpipers *C. melanotos* and its wintering Ruffs *Philomachus pugnax*. Its importance is recognised by its status as an SSSI. Threats of closure have

loomed over Wisbech for years, and the area is currently much smaller than of old. Now, a definite move to close it down completely is being made by the Anglian Water Authority. Local naturalists have launched a campaign to save at least part of the area, managed as a nature reserve, and are seeking support from local and national conservation and ornithological organisations. Draft plans for a proposed reserve have been prepared. If there is any way in which you can help, please get in touch with Dr John Lines, 22 Clarkson Avenue, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire.

A Rocha Two British families have moved down to the Portimao area in the Algarve to begin language-study and survey work prior to establishing a centre.

Their main aims are to generate concern and understanding for the environment amongst Portuguese teachers, students and others, by providing field courses and residential facilities and to strengthen Christian witness in the area. The project has been welcomed by CEMPA, the leading Portuguese bird-study and protection organisation, and by the Lusitanian church. An independent trust called 'A Rocha' (The Rock) has been established to support the work of the centre, and BCMS, an Anglican missionary society, is paying for one of the two families. Once the centre is established, visitors will be welcome to join its programme of ringing and migration studies, census and survey work and expeditions farther afield. If you would like to know more, write to Dr Bob Pullan, 13 West Drive, Upton, Wirral, Merseyside. (*Contributed by PJG*)

Geoff Macfarlane (1948-1983) The north lost one of its most enthusiastic and active birders when, on holiday in the Spanish Pyrenees in August, Geoff Macfarlane died of a heart attack. He was only 35. As well as organising cover in Northumberland for the *Atlas* in 1968-72, Geoff was involved in all the county's breeding surveys, wildfowl counts and Winter Atlas work and was a leading and prodigiously energetic participant in the Northumberland Merlin project. Ironically, while he was away, a letter arrived at his home inviting him to serve on the BTO's Populations and Surveys Committee. He will be sorely missed by his many friends and our deepest sympathy goes to his widow, Margaret, and their daughter, Helen. The



252. Geoff Macfarlane (1948-1983)

Tyneside Bird Club will not forget his contribution and, in his memory, have established a trust fund to promote future bird research in his native Northumberland. The trust will be administered by the TBC treasurer, John Day, 5 Sturdee Gardens, Jesmond, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

New RBBP secretary After serving as hon. secretary to the Rare Breeding Birds Panel for over ten years, Dr J. T. R. Sharrock has now been succeeded by a not-unfamiliar name: Robert Spencer. Correspondence for the Panel should now be addressed to RBBP, Iredale Place Cottage, Lowes Water, Cockermouth, Cumbria CA13 0SU.

Bird names explained



Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica* (Martin Hallam)

Recent reports

K. Allsopp and R. A. Hume

These are largely unchecked reports, not authenticated records

Dates in this report refer to September except where stated otherwise.

Spectacular seawatch

The month began with one of the best seawatches ever at St Ives (Cornwall). The cause was a very deep low-pressure centre which approached Ireland on 2nd, giving strong gale-force westerly winds of 45 knots across the Western Approaches, becoming northwesterly on 3rd, and then moderating as the low tracked across northern England. The seabirds were forced inshore along the west Cornish coast in considerable numbers. At St Ives, inevitably the magnet for all Cornish seawatchers, the excitement was understandably too great for accurate counting; nevertheless, some 20,000 **Gannets** *Sula bassana* and 25,000 **Manx Shearwaters** *Puffinus puffinus* were estimated to have flown

past during the day. Most unusual were the 10,000 **Storm Petrels** *Hydrobates pelagicus* (plates 253 & 256), which included a huge flock feeding at the sewage outfall, where they were regularly joined by a **Wilson's Petrel** *Oceanites oceanicus*. Surprisingly, only about ten **Leach's Petrels** *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* were involved. **Sooty Shearwaters** *Puffinus griseus* (250), **Great Shearwaters** *P. gravis* (50) and a single **Cory's Shearwater** *Calonectris diomedea* continue the tally, followed by **Great Skuas** *Stercorarius skua* (450), **Arctic Skuas** *S. parasiticus* (245), **Pomarine Skuas** *S. pomarinus* (20) and two **Long-tailed Skuas** *S. longicaudus*. The speciality of St Ives, the **Sabine's Gull** *Larus sabini*, was not missing, with about 100 being seen, mostly adults (plates 257-259), surprisingly outnumbering the 20 **Kittiwakes** *Rissa tridactyla* reported. Farther north, 3,000 **Storm**

253 & 256. Storm Petrels *Hydrobates pelagicus*, Cornwall, September 1983 (W. R. Hirst)





254. Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*, Cornwall, September 1983 (G. P. Sutton)



255. Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis*, Cornwall, September 1983 (G. P. Sutton)

Petrels, 18 **Sabine's Gulls** and four **Long-tailed Skuas** were seen at Newquay (Cornwall), three **Great Shearwaters**, 397 **Sooty Shearwaters**, 70 **Storm Petrels** and hundreds of **skuas** from Strumble Head (Dyfed), and 16 **Sooty Shearwaters** and seven **Storm Petrels** at South Stack (Gwynedd). As expected, some unfortunate seabirds were found on inland waters across southern England; as is often the case, such records were dominated by **Leach's Petrels**. That species was also the dominant petrel on 10th, again at St Ives, after another north-west blow, following the passage of one of a series of Atlantic depressions which brought unsettled westerly weather until 21st.

Waders

The westerlies, as expected, brought their annual spate of Neartic waders, but not in

exceptional numbers, with southwest England and Ireland receiving most. **Pectoral Sandpipers** *Calidris melanotos* predominated, with ten in southern Ireland, five in Cornwall, including Davidstow (plate 254), and three others elsewhere in England. There were also single **Baird's Sandpipers** *C. bairdii* at Siblyback Reservoir (Cornwall) on 3rd, Barbrook Reservoir (Derbyshire) on 9th, and Marazion (Cornwall) on 24th; a **White-rumped Sandpiper** *C. fuscicollis* at Hayle (Cornwall) on 9th; a **Least Sandpiper** *C. minutilla* at Grahams Water (Cambridgeshire) on 18th; a **Semipalmated Sandpiper** *C. pusilla* on Lundy (Devon) on 3rd; and **dowitchers** *Limnodromus* at Tacumshin Lake (Co. Wexford) on 1st, and in Orkney on 24th. **Buff-breasted Sandpipers** *Tryngites*





257-259. Sabine's Gulls *Larus sabini*, Cornwall, September 1983 (W. R. Hirst)

subruficollis were fairly numerous, with six in Ireland, three in the Isles of Scilly, three more in the southwest, including Davidstow (plate 255), and one at West Sleekburn (Northumberland) on 29th; so, too, were **Wilson's Phalaropes** *Phalaropus tricolor*, reported from the Exe Estuary (Devon) on 4th, Staines Reservoir (Middlesex) from 17th, Newton Pool (Northumberland) on 11th, and Teesmouth (Cleveland) on 14th. A **Solitary Sandpiper** *Tringa solitaria* was aptly being elusive from 19th in the Isles of Scilly, with a **Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularia* also reported there, and others seen at Cley (Norfolk) on 1st, Hayle on 8th, Drift Reservoir (Cornwall) on 25th, and at Ingbirchworth Reservoir (South Yorkshire) on 17th. Of the Palearctic species, the **Red-necked Phalarope** *Phalaropus lobatus*, with six reports throughout England, was a little commoner than usual, and **Grey Phalaropes** *P. fulicarius* resting inshore and inland were to be expected after the stormy sea-conditions (plate 263). Some localities, such as Fairhaven Lake, Lytham (Lancashire), received visits from both species (plates 264 & 265). Other notable reports were of a **Broad-**

billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* at Oldbury (Avon) during 20th-22nd August, a **Kentish Plover** *Charadrius alexandrinus* at Christchurch (Dorset) on 1st, and a **Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* at St Margaret's Bay (Kent) on 1st October, following one on Fair Isle in mid month.

More Nearctic vagrants . . .

The westerly weather period also brought in some unusually early Nearctic landbirds. An American **cuckoo** *Coccyzus* was reported from Kingsbridge (Devon) on 2nd, and nearby on the same date, at Plymouth (Devon), a **Northern Mockingbird** *Mimus polyglottos*: a new species for Britain if accepted, though three previous records are still under review. On Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork), a **Northern Waterthrush** *Seiurus noveboracensis* was found on 11th, and, in the Isles of Scilly, a **Northern Oriole** *Icterus galbula* and a **Bobolink** *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* turned up on 22nd, followed by a **Parula Warbler** *Parula americana* on 1st October.

. . . and others from the east

From the east, movements were limited, but interesting records included an early **Red-breasted Flycatcher** *Ficedula parva* on Cape Clear Island on 1st, a **Greenish Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochiloides* there on 9th, **Arctic Warblers** *P. borealis* in Orkney on 9th and on Fair Isle on 12th. There were three **Yellow-breasted Buntings** *Emberiza aureola* on Fair Isle and one on Cape Clear Island, and **Citrine Wagtails** *Motacilla citreola* at Gibraltar Point (Lincolnshire) from 4th to 10th (plates 260-262), and on North Ronaldsay (Orkney) on 19th.

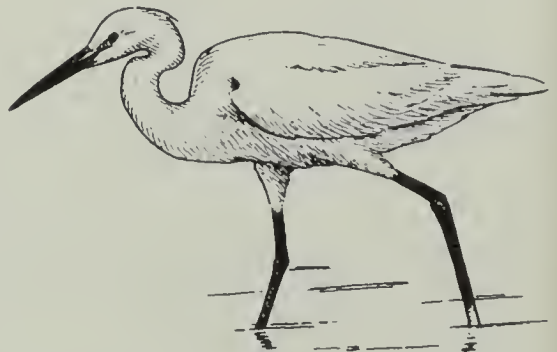
260-262. Juvenile Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*, Lincolnshire, September 1983 (top left, J. R. Clarkson; bottom left, Keith Atkin; below, David M. Cottridge)



When an anticyclone began building to the southeast of Britain from 22nd, resulting in muggy southeasterlies towards the end of the month, the Palearctic vagrants began arriving. The most exciting was the first-ever record in Britain and Ireland of a **Green Warbler** *Phylloscopus nitidus*, on 26th, inevitably in the Isles of Scilly (where there were also Greenish and Arctic Warblers for handy comparisons). An interesting **pipit** *Anthus* trapped at Portland Bill (Dorset) during 27th-29th was still awaiting specific identification when reported. **Tawny Pipits** *A. campestris* were found regularly in the southwest during the month and especially in the last week, and **Richard's Pipits** *A. novaeseelandiae* appeared at Marazion on 24th, on Fair Isle on 30th, and in the Isles of Scilly on 1st October. The intensity of bird-watching in Scilly also brought to light a **Thrush Nightingale** *Luscinia luscinia* on 26th, a **Subalpine Warbler** *Sylvia cantillans* on 24th, a **Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella brachydactyla* also on 24th, a **Scarlet Rosefinch** *Carpodacus erythrinus* on 30th, an **Arctic Warbler** *Phylloscopus borealis* on 26th and a **Bonelli's Warbler** *P. bonelli* on 1st October, the latter species also being found on the same day at St Just, nearby on the Cornish mainland. The east of England received a similar fare, as disruptive frontal systems moved northwards: a **Subalpine Warbler** at South Gare (Cleveland), a **Little Bunting** *Emberiza pusilla* at Hartlepool (Cleveland) on 30th, and another **Arctic Warbler**, at Blyth Cemetery (Northumberland) on 29th, together with a **Yellow-browed Warbler** *Phylloscopus inornatus*. The latter species also occurred at Wells in an unusually quiet Norfolk on 29th. **Red-breasted Flycatchers** appeared at Spurn (Humberside), Marsden (Tyne & Wear), on Holy Island (Northumberland) (three) on 29th, and at Wells on 30th. **Melodious Warblers** *Hippolais polyglotta* were found in Ireland and in southwest England, and there was one on Walney (Cumbria) on 23rd; **Icterine Warblers** *H. icterina* were reported from both the west and the east. A **Short-toed Treecreeper** *Certhia brachydactyla* was trapped at St Margaret's Bay (Kent) on 24th, and one was also claimed at Dungeness (Kent) on 1st October.

Other wanderers

The only Nearctic gull reported was a **Laughing Gull** *Larus atricilla* at Higway Bay (Gwynedd) on 18th, but there was Ireland's second record of a **Forster's Tern** *Sterna forsteri*, at Lady's Island Lake (Co. Wexford) on 11th. Two **Gull-billed Terns** *Gelochelidon nilotica* were also reported from Higway Bay on 18th, and another from Tacumshin Lake (Co. Wexford) on 20th. Reports of the larger wading birds were few: a **Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia* on Jersey (Channel Islands) on 23rd, a **Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea* at Glemsford (Suffolk) on 3rd, and a **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* at Martlesham Creek, Woodbridge (Suffolk), on 7th. Exciting finds were a **Hawk Owl** *Surnia ulula* which appeared at a few places in Shetland from 14th (an influx was noted in Norway and some were even seen flying out to sea over the Norwegian coast), and a **Lesser Grey Shrike** *Lanius minor*, normally a spring vagrant, at Porthscatho (Cornwall) on 4th.



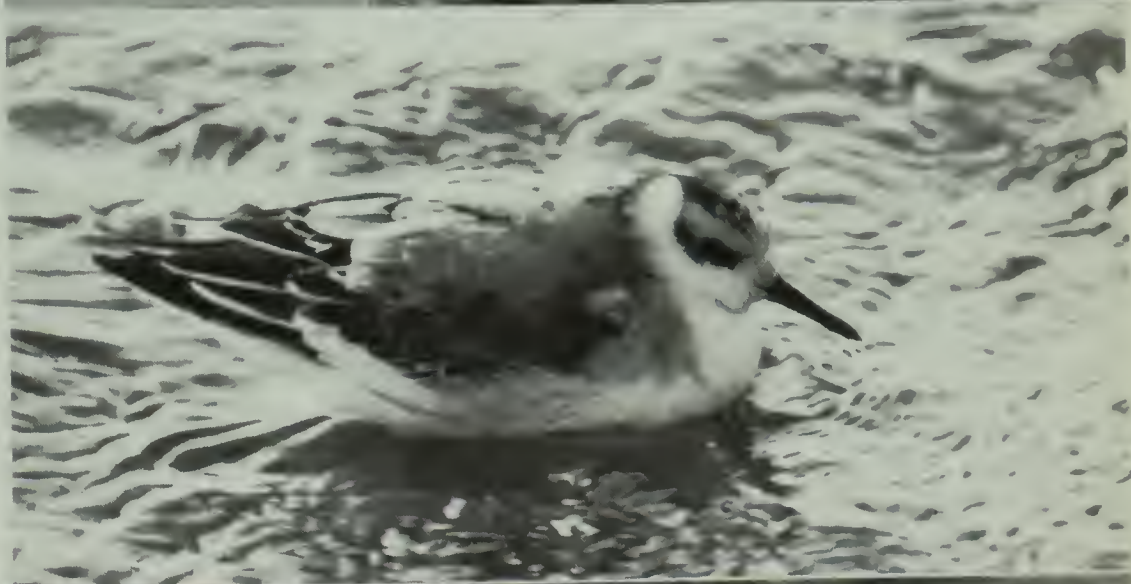
Latest news

In first half of November: **Pied Wheatear** *Oenanthe pleschanka* at Weybourne (Norfolk); **Richard's Pipit** at Aberlady Bay (Lothian); **Little Crake** *Porzana parva* at Attenborough (Nottinghamshire); reports of **Gyrfalcons** *Falco rusticolus* in North Wales and, a white-phase individual, at Ladybower (Derbyshire); **American Wigeon** *Anas americana* at Loch Ryan (Dumfries & Galloway); and **Red-breasted Goose** *Branta ruficollis* which moved around the North Norfolk coast with Brent Geese *B. bernicla*, appearing at Stiffkey, Wells, Burnham Norton and Brancaster.

263. Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*, Lancashire, September 1983 (Peter Wheeler)

264. Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*, Lancashire, September 1983 (Steve Young)

265. Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*, Lancashire, September 1983 (Steve Young)



Short reviews

The Young Naturalist. By Neil Arnold. (Ward Lock, 1983. £3.95) A nice book, very suitable for the ten- to 14-year-old with a general interest in natural history. Not a field guide (indeed, the text and the illustrations are sometimes not very well linked), but there are plenty of ideas for things to do, as well as information presented in a way likely to make the reader think. Topics, such as 'Finding butterflies and moths' and 'Birds' beaks', are covered in double-page spreads. Good value for money. **Cley Marsh and its Birds.** By Billy Bishop (Boydell & Brewer, 1983. £7.95) Regulars to Cley will enjoy Billy Bishop's reminiscences of the 'Gentlemen Gunners' who were the twitchers of their day. Inconsistencies between the Warden's Diary and the Cley Bird List are disappointing, and surely Lesser Golden Plover isn't a regular spring visitor. But such errors do not matter, for the essence of the book is in Billy's memories, well worth recording. [A. R. M. BLAKE]

Die Rohrammer. By Hans Blümel. (Die Neue Brehm-Bücherei 544, A. Ziemsen Verlag, 1982. DM6.40) The usual competent summary, in German, of all aspects of the biology of the Reed Bunting, but mostly devoted to one of the 15 races, the nominate form, breeding in much of Europe, with original material and many photographs on nesting habits, and so on, from East Germany. **Ornamental Birds.** By Stanislav Chvapil. Illustrated by Libuse and Jaromir Knotek. (Hamlyn, 1983. £2.99)

There's an awful lot of parrots, but this nice-to-handle, 223-page book provides a useful reference to those birds which are most fancied by cage-bird owners and which may escape to confuse us in the field; at this ridiculously low price, a useful investment. **Birds of the Outer Hebrides: a guide to their status and distribution.** By Peter Cunningham. (Melven Press, 1983. £5.95) This wallet-sized book covering the birds of the area now known as 'Western Isles', a name eschewed by Peter Cunningham, provides a summary which will be welcomed by local ornithologists, and will be especially useful to visiting tourists: the inexperienced who are merely interested in birds, as well as more dedicated birdwatchers. The species-summaries are succinct, varying from four or five lines to one page. The text is pleasingly readable, rather than being full of codes and abbreviations. Scattered drawings by Roger Lee are well

chosen (showing the islands' typical birds) and are very attractive. **The Birds of Cyprus: an annotated check-list.** By P. R. Flint and P. F. Stewart. (British Ornithologists' Union, 1983. £12.00; available from BOU, c/o Zoological Gardens, Regent's Park, London NW1 4RY) This is the sixth in the BOU Series of Check-lists and follows the established format. It is actually far more than just a check-list, with useful chapters on eight subjects (e.g. History of Cyprus Ornithology, Migration and Movements, and Bird Killing and Conservation), as well as the usual systematic list, which occupies the bulk of the book. Entries in this list vary from a few lines to almost a complete page, and are full of useful information with references always cited for the use of researchers. The four appendices include one which will be of enormous value to anyone visiting Cyprus: Appendix 4 'Sites of ornithological interest in Cyprus', which runs to 4½ pages; there is also a double-page map showing names of places mentioned in the text. This is a very useful book; one wonders, however, why the BOU has not taken the opportunity to add a few line-drawings or photographs and to give the volumes in this series attractive covers, thereby possibly doubling its sales: this volume *looks* like a check-list for use by a few specialists, whereas it deserves to have a much wider readership. **Die Seetaucher.** By E. O. Hohn. (Die Neue Brehm-Bücherei 546, A. Ziemsen Verlag, 1982. DM15.70) This small (96-page), but comprehensive monograph on the divers is based on both the author's research and an exhaustive survey of the literature. The text covers all the main aspects of this fascinating group: breeding behaviour, biology, distribution, and so on. The section on field identification, however, seems rather brief, and the accompanying illustrations particularly poor and uninformative. A better layout and presentation by the publishers and a more extensive selection of photographs to illustrate comparisons in non-breeding plumages and display behaviour would have added greatly to making this rather 'scientific' work more attractive to the ornithological public. [S. C. MADGE] **Learner Bird.** By Camilla Jessel. (Methuen Children's Books, 1983. £3.95) Story, illustrated with photographs, for six- to ten-year-olds, of a fledgling Song Thrush rescued

from a prowling cat, reared in captivity and then returned to the wild. It is well told, without being too sentimental. The risk of encouraging youngsters to want to have a 'pet' wild baby bird is probably outweighed by an instilment of a love of nature.

Birdwatching on Estuaries, Coast and Sea.

By Clare Lloyd. (Hamlyn Paperbacks, 1983. Paperback, £3.50) Paperback version of 1981 book already reviewed (*Brit. Birds* 74: 407).

Highland Year.

By Lea MacNally. (Century Publishing, 1983. £8.95) The 12

chapters give a month-by-month account (from November through to October) of the countryside and wildlife 'in the hills and glens of the Scottish Highlands'. The substantial text, with plenty of personal anecdote, is well illustrated by the author's own photographs. Lea MacNally was a professional deerstalker in Culachy Forest for 19 years; since 1969 he has been warden-naturalist for the National Trust for Scotland at Torridon. A good read! Reasonably priced.

The Times Nature Diary.

By Derwent May. Illustrated by Richard

Blake. (Robson Books, 1983. £5.50) Short

accounts (usually 200-300 words) of the week-by-week changing seasons of the British (usually English) countryside. The dust-jacket is twee, but the text is generally accurate and unsentimental.

Wild Britain: the Century book of marshes, fens and

broads.

By Richard North. (Century

Publishing, 1983. £12.95) An excellent

review of Britain's wetlands, well and interestingly written, with many, very appropriate photographs, both in black-and-white and in colour (the latter are especially well reproduced). The illustrations make this

a book in which it is a pleasure to browse; the

text covers the subject thoroughly, as well as

including personal anecdotes of 'the con-

servation battle'. Disappointingly, there is no

index.

Birdwatching on Inland Fresh

Waters.

By M. A. Ogilvie. (Hamlyn, 1983.

Paperback, £3.50) Paperback version of the

book reviewed recently (*Brit. Birds* 75: 344).

The Birds of Dorset.

By E. D. V. Prender-

gast and J. V. Boys. (David & Charles,

1983. £15.00) Unlike many county bird

books, the traditional systematic list takes up

only 41% and, indeed, one reaches it only

after the book's main 11 chapters have been

completed. Thus, one obtains a balanced

view of the habitats and birds of the county

before coming to the details. These main

chapters are written by a variety of authors,

but they were obviously well briefed, since

they mesh together well to give a very

thorough picture of the county. Dorset, which includes some of England's most attractive countryside and also such good bird spots as Portland Bill, Radipole Lake, Poole Harbour and, with the recent boundary changes bringing it from Hampshire into Dorset, Christchurch Harbour, attracts many visiting birdwatchers, so this nice-to-handle book will be widely welcomed for reference.

Town Birds.

By Alan

Richards. (Adam & Charles Black, 1983.

£3.50) Nice colour photographs and short,

big-type texts for small children. The 15-or-

so species included are presumably meant to

be those which are most likely to be seen by

town-dwelling youngsters; I bet, however,

that Black Redstart and Spotted Flycatcher

are not among the first 15 birds seen by most

urban birders. The cost per page is over three

times that of *BNP* (I dread to think what the

cost-per-word comparison would be!).

The Doves, Parrots, Louries and Cuckoos of

Southern Africa.

By M. K. Rowan. (Croom

Helm, 1983. £25.00) A scholarly work setting

out, species by species, all of the known facts

and figures on each of the 39 species in the

subregion, which means in most cases 95% of

what is known about each bird throughout its

entire range. All species are portrayed in

eight colour plates by Graeme Arnott; 1,000

references; a must for African ornithologists

and those interested in these families.

[C. H. FRY] **Managing Wetlands and their**

Birds: a manual of wetland and water-

fowl management. Proceedings of the

Third Technical Meeting on Western

Palearctic Migratory Bird Management.

Edited by D. A. Scott. (International

Waterfowl Research Bureau, 1982. £6.00

from IWRB, Slimbridge, Gloucester GL2 7BT)

With wetlands now at a premium, active

management is often required to ensure they

support as diverse and abundant wildlife

populations as possible. This manual

provides a useful and accessible account of

current management techniques, mainly

illustrated by practical examples. Although

it concentrates on habitat management,

other sections tackle creation of artificial

nesting sites; prevention of crop damage;

importance of predation, disease and

pollution; re-introduction programmes; and

regulation of shooting and other recreational

activities. This manual should be of value to

land-use managers and interested bird-

watchers alike. [GWYN WILLIAMS] **Birds of**

The Netherlands Antilles.

By K. H.

Vooüs. (De Walburg Pers, 1983. £11.75)

This 327-page book covers two groups of

islands—one just off the coast of Venezuela and one in the Caribbean—including Aruba, Curaçao, Bonaire, Sint Maarten, Saba and Sint Eustatius. Short chapters briefly describe each island and its habitats, but unfortunately do not include much information about the best birdwatching areas or how to reach them. The bulk of the book consists of two sections—one on each group of islands—and treats each species in a 'handbook' fashion. The plates illustrate most of the commoner species. Interesting reading. [DAVID FISHER] **Owls of Britain and Europe.** By A. A. Wardhaugh. (Blandford Press, 1983. £7.95) This is a well-written account of owls and their special characteristics, with sections summarising what is known about the British and European species, an interesting chapter on comparative lifestyles and a brief finale on owl-watching. Well researched, a good read, pleasantly illustrated: not a 'must' for your bookshelf, but a handy addition to the general literature. [M. J. EVERETT] **The Migration of Birds of Prey in the Northern Red Sea Area: report of the 1982 Suez Study.** By David Wimpfheimer, Bertel Bruun, Sherif M. Baha el Din and

Michael C. Jennings. (The Holy Land Conservation Fund, 1983. \$23.00 for overseas purchasers, available from the Holy Land Conservation Fund, 150 East 58th Street, NY 10155, USA) This 80-page report covers extensive observations of birds of prey and other species in the Suez area during the spring migration period. Although it contains many interesting observations and is clearly the result of a great deal of fieldwork, its value is seriously impaired by severe observer errors as regards the identification of even the commonest migrant bird-of-prey species. It is abundantly clear from a comparison with the comprehensive published and unpublished observations from surrounding regions that the authors and their helpers have fallen into the same pitfalls which bedevilled many earlier observers in Turkey and the Middle East. Thus, the eagles of the genus *Aquila* have been consistently confused (particularly Lesser Spotted Eagles *A. pomarina* and Steppe Eagles *A. rapax*), as have Honey Buzzards *Pernis apivorus* and Buzzards *Buteo buteo*. More accurate surveys of this most important concentration point are badly needed. [MARK BEAMAN] JTRS

Reviews

Eric Hosking's Waders. By Eric Hosking with W. G. Hale. Pelham Books, London, 1983. 185 pages; over 125 colour plates; 80 black-and-white plates. £14.95.

Although this is unashamedly a vehicle for Eric Hosking's superb photographs (both colour and black-and-white) of an excellent cross-section of the world's waders, Professor W. G. Hale's interesting and readable text is far more than mere padding.

The book's format (21.5 × 29 cm) allows Eric Hosking's photographs to be reproduced at appropriately large sizes. The resulting magnificent collection of wader portraits—many of them action shots—constitute a most useful source of reference, as well as being aesthetically pleasing. Thus, this book is likely to appeal to all those interested in bird identification, as well as to all bird-photographers and wader-watchers.

A promotional bird-photography competition, in co-operation with *Zeiss West Germany*, closes on 31st December 1983.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

Eric Hosking's Seabirds. Text by Ronald M. Lockley. Croom Helm, London, 1983. 159 pages; 122 colour plates; 25 black-and-white plates. £13.95.

A combination of the premier bird-photographer and a writer who has a long-established reputation for producing accurate scientific information in a readable easy-to-understand manner is a successful formula for a first-rate book. *Eric Hosking's Seabirds* is largely just what the title suggests: it covers over one-third of the seabirds, but with many more of the cormorants and gulls represented than the petrels. (The challenge remains open for a similar work concentrating on this family, particularly at sea.) About ten per cent of the photographs

were actually taken by David Hosking, but we are left to guess exactly which these are. Most of the photographs were taken during a voyage that Hosking and Lockley made on board *Lindblad Explorer* to Antarctica and the Galapagos, with others taken at the Seychelles, Spitzbergen, New Zealand and other widely scattered locations, including a zoo in Germany (cheating?). Particularly outstanding portraits on the ground include those of Adélie Penguins *Pygoscelis adeliae*, Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus pacificus* and Masked Boobies *Sula dactylatra*, and in-flight shots of Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus*, Waved Albatross *Diomedea irrorata* and a pretty group of White Terns *Gygis alba*. The curious looking Large-billed Tern *Phaetusa simplex* of the South American river basins may not have featured previously in bird books, so is a useful addition.

The introductory text covers seabird biology, adaptations and behaviour. It goes on to complement the photographs with useful notes on each family group which are up-to-date and largely accurate. My only criticism of this book, and it is a major one, is with identification and captions of the photographs, which would appear not to have been written by, or not reviewed by, the author, who, with his seabird experience in both hemispheres, is unlikely to have made such errors. For example, the so-called Wandering Albatross *Diomedea exulans* (p. 67) is a Black-browed Albatross *D. melanophris* (cf. *Frontiers of Bird Identification*, plate 17), the Black-browed (p. 75) is evidently a Grey-headed Albatross *D. chrysostoma*, and the gull with white primaries and grey back (p. 131) is clearly an adult Glaucous Gull and not a Great Black-backed *L. marinus*. There are others. This criticism aside, this is a beautiful book which at today's prices is fair value for money. Any birdwatcher would be pleased to receive it as a present this Christmas.

S. E. CHAPMAN

A Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe. By Roger Peterson, Guy Mountfort and P. A. D. Hollom. Fourth, revised and enlarged edition. Collins, London, 1983. 287 pages; 77 colour plates; 362 distribution maps. £7.95.

It is difficult to review dispassionately a book by such an eminent trio. The original Peterson Field Guide concept revolutionised British—indeed world—ornithology. There is nothing revolutionary in the latest edition. There are, however, many improvements; but there could have been more, and one particular aspect has shown a marked reverse.

It is fair to say that most of the improvements detailed in the preface to this fourth edition are genuine improvements.

First, there has been some enlargement in the texts relating to difficult species, making more direct comparisons with similar species; also, songs and calls have been updated where necessary.

Secondly, the systematic list now follows the Voous sequence and nomenclature, which puts it in line with *British Birds*, *BWP* and most European journals; hopefully, we have a long-lasting order again.

Thirdly, the layout of the revised edition shows several marked improvements. A total of 635 species is described, of which 131 are in the accidentals section. 26 species have been upgraded from accidental to regular(ish) status and an additional 27 species have been included in the accidental section, having recently been added to the European list. Sad to say, records of several species have been invalidated and the records deleted. The amalgamation of the plates into one central section allows thumbing through should one forget where to find a particular species, thus speeding up access both to the illustrations and to the text. The plates generally follow the order of the text, except for recent additions, which have been fitted in where space allows, with some completely new plates. I prefer the new colour illustrations; complete re-illustration would have been very worthwhile, but presumably also prohibitively expensive. At least, now, all the species are illustrated in colour, which is a step in the right direction.

Fourthly, the lumping of the distribution maps into one section is another worthwhile change; the maps are much improved, the information contained being updated and much easier to follow, with national boundaries now being shown.

I have two main criticisms. First, in the Preface, it is boldly claimed that the opportunity has been taken greatly to improve colour-reproduction. Unfortunately, there is no indication of this: there is considerable variation in the quality of the plates, and in the review copy many plates are several shades too dark.

Secondly, the detailing of occurrences of accidentals is less precise than in previous editions. Previously, countries were named; the latest edition attributes sightings only to rather generalised areas of Europe. For example, Rufous Turtle Dove was previously listed for Britain, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Italy and Greece; it is now just shown as having occurred in 'S., C., N. and W. Europe (including Britain).' The updating of the detailed listing of countries may have been a tedious chore, but the reader has lost out in this edition; we must hope that any revised edition will include a return to the former, useful, fuller style of listing.

Comparisons need to be made with other field guides. This one is pocket-sized and its price is in line with other guides, although at the top end of the range. On the whole, for anybody birdwatching in Europe, this guide will be of great benefit, notably scoring over other guides with its greater written detail. The illustrations are generally excellent (despite the less-than-perfect quality of the printing, already mentioned).

As good as the new edition is, I suggest that many long-standing ornithologists may find it unnecessary to add it to their libraries: most may feel that it is not revised enough, and that, with the third edition plus other British, European and West Palearctic Guides already on their shelves, there will be no immediate room for this edition. With the enormous number of people taking to casual—or progressing to serious—birding, however, 'Peterson' will justifiably continue to be a best seller.

D. J. HOLMAN

Birds of Prey of Britain and Europe. By Ian Wallace. Illustrated by Ian Willis. Oxford University Press, Oxford. 1983. 88 pages; 33 colour plates. £6.95.

This slim and modestly priced publication can best be described as the poor man's guide to the 37 species in the Accipitridae, Pandionidae and Falconidae which graced volume II of the *BWP* handbook. Someone had the admirable thought of reproducing Ian Willis's remarkably effective plates from this major work, and asking one of the *BWP* editors to supply a new accompanying text. The play has worked.

Following an Olympian-style foreword by Stanley Cramp, there is a briskly discursive and well composed introduction reminiscent of that great raptor man, the late Leslie Brown. Thence onwards, each plate has a facing page devoted to identification features of the perched and flying bird, with comments on populations and distribution.

Hopefully, we may look forward to similar treatment for other groups from *BWP*, but it will be a pity if as many blank spaces are left in the pages as is the case here. The author, no mean hand at vignettes, might have occupied them.

DEREK BARBER

Corrections

VOLUME 71

Pages

NESTING OF BLACK-SHOULDERED KITES IN PORTUGAL

404 Line 9. 'DDE 710' should read 'DDE 7.1'.

411 References. CORTÉS, J. E., *et al.* Publication date should be 1980.

412 Table 1. Female Corn Bunting bill-depth: standard deviation should read '0.19' not '9.19'.

VOLUME 75

Page

548 IDENTIFYING SERINS Fig. 1 has incorrect caption: see amendment *Brit. Birds* 76: 318.

VOLUME 76

Pages

94 YOUNG ORNITHOLOGISTS OF THE YEAR The missing line should read:
'Shona Glover (12), will each receive their prize of £35-worth of books at a'

EUROPEAN NEWS

273- In entries under Greater Flamingo, Citrine Wagtail, Pallas's Warbler, Yellow-browed
276 Warbler and Firecrest: 'LITHUANIAN SSR' should read 'LATVIAN SSR'.

433 FIELD IDENTIFICATION OF WHEATEAR AND ISABELLINE WHEATEAR Plate 178. For
'August' read 'July 1971'.

Whisky Puzzle

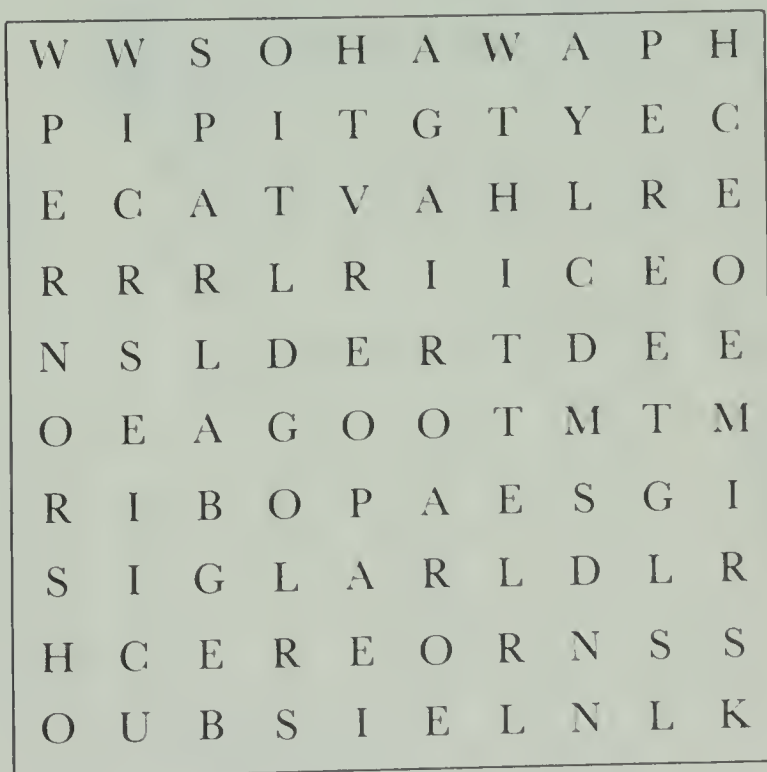
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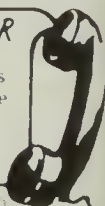
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The original paintings for the colour plates in the first edition by the Dutch artist H. J. Slijper were again available. Together with five new ones made by the same artist, there are now 21 plates in full colour and 6 plain ones, depicting 145 of the 252 species described, among which are 35 not illustrated in current North American field guides.

About the Author

Professor Dr. K. H. Voous is a Dutch ornithologist of international reputation. His name is well known as the author of '*The Atlas of European Birds*' (1960, also published in Dutch and German), the '*List of Recent Holarctic Bird Species*' (1973, 1977) and of numerous publications in scientific journals such as '*Ardea*' and '*Limosa*', journals of the Netherlands Ornithological Union. Karel Hendrik Voous was born in 1920 and received (27 years old) his doctors degree (with honours) from the University of Amsterdam on the thesis '*On the history of the distribution of the genus Dendrocopos*'. Eight years later he was professor, still at Amsterdam. Alongside his curatorial work at the Zoological Museum of the University of Amsterdam and his educational task at the Free University, he was and still is active in many scientific organisations. He was secretary of the Netherlands Ornithological Society (1947-1957), chairman of the Netherlands Committee for the European Nature Conservation Year 1970 (1967-1970), secretary-general of the 15th International Ornithological Congress at The Hague, Netherlands (1970), chairman of the Committee for the Netherlands Avifauna (1957-1982), chairman of the Standing Committee for the Coordination of Seabird Research (1966-1982), member of the Standing Committee for Ornithological Nomenclature (since 1966), member of the World Working Group on Birds of Prey and Owls of the International Council for Bird Preservation (since 1976). Furthermore he is adviser to Prince Bernhard in his function as president of the Netherlands branch of the World Wildlife Fund. He is officer in the Order of the Golden Ark (1981) and received the Golden Medal of the British Ornithologists' Union (1975), the first and up till now only person outside the Commonwealth to do so. He is an honorary or corresponding member of eleven scientific and ornithological societies, including honorary fellowship of the American Ornithologists' Union.

About the Artist

Henk J. Slijper (born 1922) is one of the most gifted of contemporary Dutch bird painters. He is a master of widely varying techniques, from making the finest of children's miniature portraits to painting large murals. He is an expert in the meticulous technique of Old Dutch masters. He has illustrated numerous books devoted to nature and birds and has made wall charts of common Dutch birds which have enjoyed great popularity.

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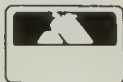
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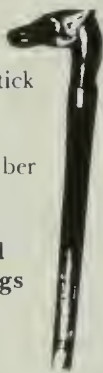
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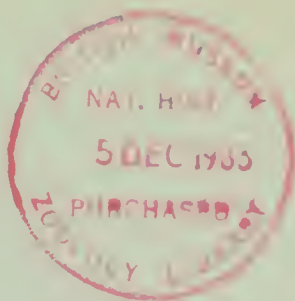
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Volume 76

1983

British Birds Ltd



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Compiled by Mrs N. D. Blamire

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(1) every significant mention of each species, not only in titles, but also within the text of papers, notes and letters, including all those appearing in such lists as the 'Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 1980', but excluding those in 'Recent reports', 'News and comment', requests and reviews;

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Eleonora's Falcon (*Martin W. Woodcock*)

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